

Indonesia releases Papuan activist Victor Yeimo from prison

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Contents

- [ULMWP thanks Papuan people for](#)
- [Thousands turn out to welcome](#)

ULMWP thanks Papuan people for consistently supporting Victor Yeimo's release

Jayapura — In his remarks welcoming Papua activist Victor Yeimo's release from prison on Saturday September 23, United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) Secretary Markus Haluk expressed his appreciation and gratitude to all parties in the Land of Papua.

In particular he thanked Yeimo's team of lawyers from the Papua Law Enforcement and Human Rights Coalition (KPHHP), the Papuan Council of Churches, students and the ordinary Papuans, who supported Yeimo so that in the end he could be free today.

"Welcome from the small prison to the big prison", said Haluk during a thanksgiving organised by the Papuan people at the Waena Expo in Jayapura City, Papua province.

Haluk called on the Papuan people to struggle in their different ways and in accordance with the talents that God has given them.

"The youth generation is not just fighting politically, but also through writing and academic studies. Let us struggle with the megaphone, with the pen, with diplomacy and other means to achieve our mutual goal, namely Papua independence", he said.

Yeimo had earlier been indicted on charges of makar (treason, subversion, rebellion) because he was alleged to have been the masterminded behind the demonstrations in Jayapura city on August 19 and 29, 2019.

The demonstrations were protesting racist slurs directed against Papuan students in the East Java city of Surabaya on August 16, 2019.

On May 5 this year, the panel of judges at the Jayapura District Court declared that Yeimo was not guilty of committing makar. The judges however said that Yeimo had been proven guilty of violating Article 155 Paragraph (1) of the Criminal Code (KUHP).

These articles cover stipulations on the crime of broadcasting, exhibiting or posting writing or images in public that contain statements expressing feelings of hostility or hatred towards or insulting the Indonesian government. The judges sentenced Yeimo to eight months in prison.

The sentence attracted controversy because Article 155 Paragraph (1) of the KUHP, which was used in the indictment against Yeimo and for sentencing him to eight months in prison, was struck down by the Constitutional Court in 2007.

Thousands turn out to welcome Papua activist Victor Yeimo's release from prison

Jayapura — West Papua National Committee (KNPB) international spokesperson Victor F. Yeimo was released from the Abepura Penitentiary in Jayapura city on Saturday September 23. He was greeted by family members, activists, his team of lawyers and thousands of ordinary Papuans.

On May 5 Yeimo sentence to eight months in prison on charges of makar (treason, subversion, rebellion) for allegedly being involved in and mobilising anti-racism protests in Jayapura on August 19 and 29, 2019.

At exactly 11.17 am, Yeimo was escorted out of the Abepura Penitentiary by prison officials.

He was then greeted by family members and his team of lawyers from the Papua Law Enforcement and Human Rights Coalition (KPHHP), advocates Emanuel Gobay, Persila Heselo, Gustaf Kawer and other team members. Also present was Papua Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) lawmaker Laurenzus Kadepa.

Yeimo said that his release today is not the end of the struggle and called on all Papuan people to continue to fight racist discrimination.

"Today I am free, but the continuing struggle is to be free from racism that still exists in [and is still a festering wound in this country]", said Yeimo.

Yeimo was then accompanied in a procession to the Waena Expo to take part in a thanksgiving event to celebrate his release. The procession and thanksgiving event were closely watched over by police.

Activists blocked by police

Scores of activists who went to the Abepura Penitentiary to pick Yeimo up however were initially blocked by police at the Abepura taxi traffic circle.

An argument broke out between the activists, Yeimo's team of lawyers and the police who were on guard in front of the Sumber Makmur shop. In the end however, they were allowed to greet Yeimo at the prison.

During the procession from the Abepura prison, Yeimo and his entourage were closely guarded by police until they reached the Waena Expo where the thanksgiving event was to be held.

Also present at the thanksgiving was acting Papua Council of Churches moderator Benny Giay and United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) Secretary Markus Haluk.

The thanksgiving was held under the theme "Racism is a Global Enemy".

When Yeimo arrived, he was greeted by thousands of supporters, traditional dances by different tribal groups and shouts of "Free Papua".

A number of those present wore the Moring Star independence symbols on their bodies or noken

(knitted or woven bags). Others unfurled KNPB flags.

“All of the resistance groups have joined us here. The KNPB, the Papuan Traditional Council, Sonamapa [West Papua Youth and Student National Solidarity], Green Papua and all of the people and student movements that have joined in”, said organising committee head Kamus Bayage in welcoming Yeimo’s release.

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P.S.

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