

Indonesia's neo-colonial stranglehold: Activists, Church Groups Condemn Oppression Against West Papua

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Indonesia's neo-colonial stranglehold on West Papua has seen massacres, media blackouts and widespread human rights abuses.

A coalition of activists and church groups have called on Indonesia to end the widespread, yet little known violence and oppression in West Papua and to allow international journalists, observers, human rights groups and aid organizations in the country.

"We support the struggle for human rights of the people of Papua. We urge an end to the ongoing violence and impunity. We support the call for social and economic justice through serious dialogue and a concrete political process that seeks to address root causes of the present problems," said Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of World Council of Churches, WCC.

The WCC met in consultation with members from the International Coalition on Papua in Geneva, Switzerland last week. Others including civil society organizations and diplomats also met to discuss the widespread human rights abuses in West Papua.

West Papuans won their independence from Dutch colonialism in 1963. As part of a controversial referendum in 1969, it was annexed by Indonesia, which has since ruled with an iron fist over the mostly Melanesian Indigenous population.

Around half a million Melanesians are thought to have been killed by Indonesian authorities. They face restrictions of movement and assembly, with many protesters being held as political prisoners.

Melanesians have been leading a continued struggle for independence, but many of their leaders have been forced into exile. Their struggle has gone largely unknown because of media bans by the Indonesian government.

Victor Yeimo of the West Papua National Committee said that he had asked Indonesian President Joko Widodo to allow international journalists into West Papua, but added that this continued to be rejected, saying that "there is no trust between the people of West Papua and the government in Jakarta."

"The government of Indonesia fails to address the root problem, which is the historical problem. The West Papuan people will not stop screaming for independence until the root cause is addressed," said Veronica Koman of the Indigenous group Papua Itu Kita based out of Jakarta.

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* Telesur. 1 March 2017:

<http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Activists-Church-Groups-Condemn-Oppression-Against-West-Papua-20170301-0021.html>