

# **West Papua's central highlands: Security force members allegedly shoot dead high school student in Puncak - second student injured by bullets**

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**The armed conflict in West Papua's central highlands continues to deteriorate, costing the lives of innocent civilians. The latest extra-judicial killing was reported from the Papuan regency of Puncak.**

According to the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Desk of the Papuan Tabernacle Church (JPIC Kingmi Papua) and the Papuan Institute for Human Rights Study and Advocacy (ELSHAM Papua), the two students were on their way from the town of Ilaga to their home village in the district of Agundugume on 20 November 2020. When the minors reached the Limbaga Mountain in the Gome District, they were intercepted by group of fully armed security force members who reportedly tried to execute both minors. Seventeen-year-old Manus Murib sustained three bullet injuries as he escaped the execution while his friend, Atanius Murib (17 years) was killed on the spot.

Manus Murib and Atanius Murib left Ilaga early in the morning around 3.00 am because the walk takes around eleven hours. Around 10.30 am, the students ascended the Limbaga Mountain as a group of security force members approached them. They were wearing balaclavas, black combat suits and bullet-proof vests. Manus Murib identified the combatants as Indonesian security force members. One of the soldiers asked the minors "Where did you come from and where are you heading?" The students answered that they were coming from Ilaga and were on the way to their village in the Agundugume District where they wanted to stay over Christmas.



*Atanius Murib*

According to Manus Murib, one security force member handed a pistol to the boys and told them to hold the gun while another security force member took a photo. Feeling uncomfortable about the situation, Manus Murib and Atanius Murib tried to escape. They feared that the security force members had planned to kill them and use the photos to incriminate the students as members of the

West Papua National Liberation Army (TPN PB). Atanius Murib was hit by a bullet and died instantly during the attempted escape (see photo on the right, source: JPIC Kingmi Papua). Manus Murib sustained three bullet injuries in the right ear, the neck and the armpit. After hiding in the forest, he continued walking to his village where he arrived around 10.00 am. Manus Murib was evacuated to the General Hospital in Timika on 21 November 2020 (see photo on top, source: JPIC Kingmi Papua), where the doctors reportedly removed two bullet projectiles from his body.

The Kogabwilhan III military commander, Colonel Suriastawa, claimed that the shooting was carried out by members of armed criminal groups (Kelompok Kriminal Bersenjata or KKB), an expression that is usually used by security force members for TPN PB fighters. He explained in an interview with media outlet Jubi that the attack was likely another violent act by the TPN PB to create a bad image of Indonesian Government in the international community. Papuan police chief, Paulus Waterpauw, made a public statement according to which unknown perpetrators were allegedly responsible for the attack.

The relatives confirmed that Manus Murib was a high school student – he was not associated with the TPN PB. Atanius Murib's relatives demanded the Indonesian military to return the victim's body to the village in order to conduct a burial.

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