



CONDEMNING THE CLAMPDOWN ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN INDONESIA: Nearly one hundred West Papuans arrested in two days

London, 4 September 2018

TAPOL condemns the mass and unlawful arrests of West Papuan students and activists.

A total of 79 protesters from the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) were arrested for engaging in a non-violent protest in Jayapura, Papua, Indonesia, on Tuesday, 4 September 2018. The protesters were expressing their support for the Republic of Vanuatu to raise the issue of West Papua's self-determination during the 49th Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) in Nauru. Reports indicated that Vanuatu planned to present a draft resolution to the Pacific Islands Forum, calling for Indonesian-ruled West Papua to be inscribed on the United Nations' de-colonisation list at next year's UN General Assembly.^{1,2} Demonstrators also called on the Indonesian government to respect their rights to self-determination, and the international community to recognise their plight.

This incident is the latest in a series of clampdowns on freedom of expression in West Papua. One day earlier, on 3 September, 14 people were arrested while peacefully demonstrating for justice in West Papua. They called for closure of the Freeport mining company over adverse impacts it has caused to local indigenous peoples, the building of markets for marginalised West Papuan women merchants, and the demilitarisation of West Papua.³

Arbitrary arrests are routinely used by the Indonesian police to deter citizens from exercising their rights to peacefully organise, associate, and express social and political aspirations. These latest incidents of mass arrests underscore both the iron grip of militarism in West Papua and tactics employed to deter civil society: points that were also raised by demonstrators during the September 4th demonstrations.

We, therefore, demand the Indonesian government to respect and uphold the rights to freedom of expression of West Papuan people and open access to human rights organisations and independent reporters to monitor human rights situation in West Papua

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¹ <http://tabloidjubi.com/artikel-19165--demo-ulmwp-total-ada-81-pendemo-ditangkap-polisi.html>

² <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/364490/vanuatu-could-be-alone-on-west-papua-bid-at-un>

³ <http://tabloidjubi.com/artikel-19134-14-peserta-demo-garda-papua-sempat-ditangkap-polisi.html>