



## Promoting human rights, peace and democracy in Indonesia

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HE Teuku Mohammad Hamzah Thayeb  
Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to the UK and Ireland  
Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia  
38 Grosvenor Square  
London W1K 2HW

2 April 2014

Your Excellency,

### Call for release of Papuan political prisoners

We are today organising a peaceful demonstration outside the Indonesian Embassy to protest against the ongoing detention of 76 political prisoners in West Papua and to call for their immediate and unconditional release.

We believe that the lack of respect for freedom of expression in West Papua is an urgent and pressing concern. Indigenous Papuans continue to be arbitrarily arrested and detained for peaceful actions, such as raising the Morning Star flag or attending political demonstrations and public events.

In May 2013, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, issued a statement critical of the ongoing suppression of freedom of expression in West Papua:

*"During my mission to Indonesia last November, I expressed concern over Papuan activists being imprisoned for the peaceful exercise of freedom of expression,"* said Pillay. *"It is disappointing to see more people arrested for peacefully expressing their views and I call upon the Government to release all prisoners in custody for crimes that relate to their freedom of expression."*<sup>1</sup>

Regrettably, the Government of Indonesia has not yet responded to the High Commissioner's call for the release of prisoners. On the contrary, the evidence suggests a further deterioration in the environment for freedom of expression throughout 2013. Data provided by the monitoring collective, [Papuans Behind Bars](#), indicates that the number of political arrests<sup>2</sup> more than doubled in 2013 compared to 2012 and the number of those ultimately charged also significantly increased.

There was a major deterioration in respect for the rights of political detainees during 2013. Reported cases of torture and ill-treatment in detention tripled while the number of cases involving unfair trials or denial of access to lawyers doubled. The lack of access to appropriate healthcare and the intimidation of detainees and their lawyers are also key concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> See 'Pillay concerned about persistent violence and abuses in Papua (Indonesia)' at

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=13287&LangID=E>

<sup>2</sup> Defined by Papuans Behind Bars as '...arrests which appear to be politically motivated, and can include arrests which happen in political contexts such as demonstrations or places used by politically active organisations and people; arrests of politically active people or their relatives; arrests of people because of their alleged political affiliations; arrests for political activities such as raising a flag or engaging in civil resistance activities, mass arrests, and politically-motivated arrests under manipulated criminal charges.'

The revelation of this huge increase is particularly disturbing in the run-up to the Indonesian national elections next week. The lack of democratic space in Papua means that the elections are largely irrelevant as far as many Papuans are concerned. National politics are meaningless to people who are unable to participate in normal political processes because of the heavy-handed military/security approach to the problems of their region.

At the end of February 2014, there were at least 76 political prisoners in Papuan jails. Their details are provided in the enclosed list.

We believe that greater respect for freedom of expression in Papua is critical for progress to be made towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict. We therefore urge the Government of Indonesia to:

- end the practice of charging persons engaged in peaceful political activities with criminal offences such as treason and conspiracy under Articles 106 and 110 of the Indonesian Criminal Code and possession of weapons and/or ammunition under Emergency Law 12/1951;
- order the immediate and unconditional release of Papuan political prisoners as part of a comprehensive policy aimed at ending the punishment of free expression and finding a peaceful political solution to the Papua conflict;
- comply fully with international standards concerning the treatment of prisoners, the right to due process, the right to a fair trial, the right to proper medical care and full access to appropriate health facilities;
- allow free and unrestricted access to the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, as was pledged by the Government of Indonesia during the Universal Periodic Review in Geneva in 2012.

We are grateful to you for your attention to these matters and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "P. Barber".

Paul Barber  
Coordinator, TAPOL