

Written evidence from TAPOL and Jubi (GMF0032)

1. Written evidence submitted by Pelagio Da Costa Sarmento and Victor Mambor on behalf of TAPOL and Jubi, respectively.
2. Executive summary
 - 2.1. Indonesia ranks 124 out of 180 countries in the 2019 Global Press Freedom Index, West Papua as the most closed region to foreign media coverage[1]
 - 2.2. There are patterns of threats that implicate the safety and security of local journalists in the territory
 - 2.3. A clearing house, an intricate red-tape, is re-introduced in May 2019 to select foreign journalists coming to West Papua. Once a permit is granted, security forces will supervise the selected journalists during their work in West Papua.
 - 2.4. Over the past 10 years, there have been two deaths, multiple assaults, arrests on local journalists and deportation international journalists. Most of the cases remain open with no clear investigation process.
 - 2.5. Disinformation using bogus online media disrupts the work of legitimate news sources.
3. TAPOL is a London-based Human Rights organisation established in 1973 that campaigns for human rights, peace and democracy in Indonesia. TAPOL has been a consistent voice campaigning for freedom of expression and freedom of assembly in West Papua.
4. Jubi was founded in 2001, a registered independent West Papua-based media producing printed daily news and an online portal. Jubi provides training for West Papuan journalists and actively advocating for freedom of expression and freedom of the press in West Papua.
5. West Papuans have been experiencing serious human rights violations including torture, imprisonment and extrajudicial killings by the Indonesian security forces (police and military). The West Papuans have long expressed their desire for self-determination since Indonesia took over the territory in 1963. It was officially incorporated into the Indonesian state in 1969 after the “Act of Free Choice.” Simmering low level conflict between various pro-independence groups and the Indonesian army have been ongoing since then, with the continued existence of local armed groups in West Papua. Indonesia has maintained a significant military presence in the region.
6. In recent years civil resistance movements have gained traction organising protests against human rights violations in West Papua and demanding the right to self-determination. As a consequence, the Indonesian government has tightened security control over West Papua by maintaining the presence of both military and police forces and deploying these state security forces to stop rallies or discussions on human rights and/or political issues, and clamp down on the freedoms of expression, association, and assembly. Human rights violations and extrajudicial killings by the military and police in West Papua rarely make the headlines in the mainstream media. There is no freedom of expression or freedom of information in West Papua.
7. Indonesia is ranked 124th of 180 countries in the Global Index of Press Freedom (2019) published by Reporters Without Borders. West Papua plays a significant factor in this low scoring. While other parts of Indonesia enjoy fairly free media coverage, West Papua remains the most closed region to media access, particularly to foreign media.[2]
8. In February 2006, the Indonesian Defence Minister, Juwono Sudarsono, was quoted in relation to the deportation of five Australian Journalists after being arrested in West Papua, “We believe that Indonesian unity and cohesion would be threatened by an intrusion and a foreign interest.”[3]
9. In May 2015, President Joko Widodo promised to open access to West Papua for foreign media.[4] However this promise has yet to be fulfilled. There have been many cases since then where access to foreign media limited or refused. Further, there are several cases of foreigners visiting West Papua being deported from Indonesia on suspicion of being journalists.
10. In May 2019, the head of the immigration division in the regional office of the Ministry for Law and Human Rights in Papua Province reaffirmed a “clearing house” system for any foreign journalists wanting to visit West Papua.[5] If a permit is granted the foreign journalist will then be supervised by the security forces during their whole working trip in West Papua.
11. The following evidence is gathered from the direct experience of Jubi reporters as well the information that TAPOL received directly from the ground. For the purpose of this submission we have cross-referenced with media organisations such as Reporters Sans Frontier (RSF) and Human Rights Watch (HRW).

Evidence

12. Journalists in West Papua have faced serious threats in the last 10 years, and continue to do so, not only in getting access to information but also in terms of their own personal safety. Below are some of the reported cases that exemplify this situation.
 - 12.1. *Cases related to local journalists :*
 - 12.1.1. Mysterious circumstances around the death of journalist Ardiansyah Matrais. Journalist Ardiansyah Matrais was a correspondent for Jubi and Merauke TV. He was reported missing on 28 July 2010. On 30 July his body was retrieved from the Gudang Arang Merauke river. According to the autopsy report by the police, Ardiansyah was still alive when he was thrown into the river. The Papuan Independent Journalist Alliance (AJI Papua) suspected that Ardiansyah was tortured and killed by unknown assailants and demanded the police in Merauke conduct a thorough investigation and bring the perpetrators to justice. However, there was never a significant effort made to investigate Ardiansyah’s case. In August 2010, AJI conducted their own investigation. The result of their investigation showed that there were indications of torture on the victim’s body. They discovered traces of strangulation on his neck, his ears were bleeding and there were bruises along his body as indicating that he had been beaten using blunt objects. AJI suspected that Ardiansyah’s killing had to do with a series of threats against journalists in the days leading up to local elections in Merauke.[6][7] His case remains unresolved.
 - 12.1.2. Stabbing of journalist Banjir Ambarita (2011). The Jakarta Globe daily and Vivanews.com correspondent was stabbed while driving a motorbike. It is suspected that the motive was related to an article he had written on the sexual abuse of a detainee by three police officers.[8] No further investigation was taken on his case.
 - 12.1.3. Death of journalist Leiron Kogoya (2012). Kogoya was a journalist for Pasific Post and Papua Pos Nabire. He died when his plane was shot down by gunmen in an airport in Papua Province. Though he was not specifically the target, his death served as a reminder of the dangers that journalists face in West Papua.[9]
 - 12.1.4. Assault on Abeth You (2015). Abeth You is a journalist writing for Jubi. He was attacked by police in October 2015 when covering a demonstration on human rights violations in West Papua.[10]
 - 12.1.5. The arrest of journalist Ardi Bayage (2016). Ardi Bayage reports for Suarapapua.com. He was arrested when covering a protest during World Press Freedom Day in 2016. Bayage showed his press card to the police, however the police ignored and accused him of lying. He was held for several hours in the police headquarters in Jayapura.[11]
 - 12.1.6. Beating of journalist Abeth You (2018). In May 2018 the Jubi journalist Abeth You captured the police beating his colleague Mando Mote on his mobile phone. He was choked by a member of the police, his mobile phone was taken away and his press card was destroyed. The two journalists were attending a public debate involving local candidates in Deiyai, prior to the local election in 2018.[12]
 - 12.2. *Cases related to foreign journalists:*
 - 12.2.1. Deportation of five Australian journalists from Papua (2006). In September 2006 five Australian Channel Seven journalists were detained and put under

surveillance in Jayapura, Papua province. Naomi Robson, Rohan Travis, Peter Andrew, Paul Richard and David John were detained on charges of entering the province with tourist visas. They were forced on a flight back to Jakarta on 14 September from where they were expelled from the country. Papua police chief, Major-General Tommy Jacobus told AP, “They admitted being journalists trying to report on the situation here. It is best that we deport them.” “We believe that Indonesian unity and cohesion would be threatened by an intrusion and a foreign interest,” Indonesian Defence Minister, Juwono Sudarsono, February 2006. [13]

12.2.2. Detention of two French journalists, Thomas Dandois and Valentine Bourrat (2014). The French journalists, Thomas Dandois and Valentine Bourrat, were detained in August 2014 in Papua province. They were doing a report on West Papua for the Franco-German TV channel Arte. They were charged with violation of immigration regulations and promoting instability. Their local guide and interpreter was also arrested and interrogated by the police for 36 hours. [14]

12.2.3. Visa denial for Cyril Payen to report in Papua (2016). On 8 January, the Indonesian Embassy in Bangkok informed Payen that his application for a visa to visit Indonesia and carry out reporting in Papua province had been denied. The Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials later informed the French Embassy in Jakarta that the denial of the visa to journalist Cyril Payen was because his previous reporting on the pro-independence movement was “biased and unbalanced”. [15]

12.2.4. Deportation of French journalist Basil Longchamp and his camera crew from Indonesia (2017). The French journalists were granted permission to work on a documentary in Indonesia covering West Papua. However on their arrival in Indonesia, they were expelled and banned from returning to Indonesia. The authorities accused them of showing “lack of coordination with relevant institutions”. [16]

12.2.5. Expulsion of Rebecca Henschke (2018). Australian BBC journalist Rebecca Henschke and her crew received an official permit to cover a military aid operation in West Papua. However, when the authorities found out about her Twitter post showing troops providing only non-nutritious foodstuffs, the journalist and her crew were expelled on the grounds that her post “hurt the feelings” of the soldiers. [17]

12.2.6. Blacklisting Belinda Lopez (2018). Belinda Lopez is a PhD candidate in Indonesian studies at Macquarie University in Australia. She was detained in Denpasar after arriving from Australia for her honeymoon in Indonesia. She was also planning to visit West Papua to attend a festival. Immigration officials told her that her name was blacklisted without offering any other justification as to why she was blacklisted. Belinda Lopez formerly worked as a reporter in Jakarta. She had already been deported from West Papua once in 2016 on suspicion of being a journalist. [18][19]

13. The above data exemplifies acute risks and barriers for journalists working in West Papua. Additionally, foreigners who enter West Papua face the potential threat of being accused of carrying out journalism activities in West Papua. In 2018, Jakub Skrzypski, a Polish citizen was arrested initially on suspicion of carrying out journalistic activities. [20] He is currently in jail in West Papua convicted for treason due to a meeting with National Committee for West Papua (KNPB) members. Also in December 2018, an Australian citizen, Ronda Amy Harman was arrested in Surabaya. She was suspected of being a journalist, trying to cover a protest during which there were mass arrests of students at the time. [21]

14. *The spread of bogus online media platforms*

14.1. West Papua also suffers from the existence of bogus online media. According to an investigation by Jubi and a Jakarta based media, Tirto, in 2018 there were around 18 online media platforms that were dubious and bogus. Their style of reporting include producing hoaxes and propaganda regarding West Papua, quoting fictitious sources and conveying strong bias in favour of the police and the military in West Papua. [22] Their work severely disrupts the work of genuine media organisations which also have an online presence. They make a major contribution to the spread of disinformation to the public regarding the issues in West Papua. They also affect the work of civil society organisations that have limited access to the region, and that rely on the online news reporting that comes out of West Papua.

14.2. This is an example how bogus online media disrupted a critical humanitarian work. Presently civil society has been facing difficulties in verifying information and human rights violations allegedly taking place in Nduga Regency, in the Central Highland of West Papua. Indonesian police and military have been conducting a joint operation against the West Papua Liberation Army since December 2018. Independent sources have been very difficult to reach and the military has been the sole source of information. Any accounts differing from the military are declared as a hoax, whereas not a single press worker can access Nduga due to the lockdown. A local Papuan senator was reported to police when he stated that there were civilian deaths resulting from the operation. This makes balanced and accurate reporting from the ground nigh on impossible. It is also undermining the image of a free and fair media in Indonesia - one of the largest democratic nations in the world. There is very limited accountability on the part of the authorities towards the ongoing human rights crisis in West Papua.

15. *International community's responses*

15.1. The Universal Periodic Review is an opportunity for a member state of the United Nations to receive inputs and recommendations from other member states with regard to their human rights record. In relation to freedom of the press, in the past 3 cycles of Review (2008, 2012 and 2017) Indonesia has received 7 recommendations from 5 member states. In particular, New Zealand (2017) and France (2012, 2017) called for Indonesia to respect press freedom and open access to national and international journalists to West Papua. [23]

15.2. This development combined with the above examples show a critical pattern for media freedom in West Papua. Serious actions are necessary, particularly when viewed through a human rights lense. Indonesia is a signatory to the UN International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees, among others, rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. Indonesia, as a democratic nation, needs to improve media freedom in all of the regions including West Papua. International relations can help improve Indonesian government policies particularly on this issue. For more than 70 years now, the UK has been developing strong relations with Indonesia. Therefore we recommend the following actions for the UK government to take in order to improve media freedom in Indonesia, particularly in West Papua.

16. *Recommendations for action*

16.1. Britain has taken a prominent position in promoting global media freedom as is evident from this inquiry. We therefore call on the United Kingdom to ensure freedom of the press is upheld universally, including in West Papua

16.2. Indonesia is currently holding the rotating presidency of the UN Security Council, of which the United Kingdom is a permanent member. We call the United Kingdom to remind Indonesia to maintain its credibility by providing access to the national and international media so that they can provide unrestricted coverage in West Papua.

16.3. The effort to address the proliferation of fake news and so-called post-truth politics requires open and equal access to verified information. The United Kingdom should press Indonesia to protect journalists working in West Papua and ensure that they are free from any harassment by security forces.

16.4. We also call on the United Kingdom to request that Indonesia brings to justice those responsible for attacks on and killings of journalists in West Papua.

16.5. Support local initiatives through increased development aid funding that will strengthen capacities of local organisations, media outlets, and journalists in West Papua, while enabling greater transparency and credible documentation of the ongoing human rights crisis in West Papua.

- [2] <https://rsf.org/en/indonesia>
- [3] <https://rsf.org/en/news/five-australian-journalists-expelled-papua>
- [4] <https://setkab.go.id/en/president-jokowi-frees-foreign-journalists-for-journalistic-duty-to-papua/>
- [5] <http://www.humanrightspapua.org/news/31-2019/439-government-continues-restrictive-policy-on-access-of-foreign-journalists-to-west-papua>
- [6] <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/217169/aji-jayapura-wartawan-merauke-tewas-dibunuh>
- [7] <http://www.downtoearth-indonesia.org/story/journalist-s-death-overshadows-launch-papua-food-project>
- [8] <https://rsf.org/en/news/papua-based-reporter-seriously-injured-stabbing>
- [9] <https://rsf.org/en/news/journalist-killed-gunmen-attack-plane-papua-province-airport>
- [10] <https://rsf.org/en/news/rsf-tells-indonesia-stop-flouting-journalists-rights-west-papua>
- [11] <https://rsf.org/en/news/rsf-tells-indonesia-stop-flouting-journalists-rights-west-papua>
- [12] <https://suarapapua.com/2018/05/18/polda-papua-harus-pecat-pelaku-kekerasan-terhadap-wartawan-jubi-abeth-you-dan-mando-mote-di-nabire/>
- [13] <https://rsf.org/en/news/five-australian-journalists-expelled-papua>
- [14] <https://rsf.org/en/news/two-french-journalists-held-past-five-days-indonesian-province-papua>
- [15] <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/22/indonesias-papua-reporting-paranoia>
- [16] <https://rsf.org/en/news/rsf-asks-indonesias-president-let-journalists-work-west-papua>
- [17] <https://rsf.org/en/news/rsfs-decries-journalists-expulsion-indonesias-papua-region>
- [18] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/04/australian-student-barred-from-indonesia-and-blacklisted-by-government>
- [19] <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/08/06/indonesias-papua-media-blacklist-0>
- [20] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-48132165>
- [21] <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/12/04/223-papuan-students-removed-surabaya-after-rally.html>
- [22] <https://tirto.id/media-siluman-di-papua-propaganda-hoaks-hingga-narasumber-fiktif-da5B>
- [23] https://www.upr-info.org/database/index.php?limit=0&f_SUR=77&f_SMR=All&order=&orderDir=ASC&orderP=true&f_Issue=All&searchReco=&resultMax=100&response=&action_type=&session=&SuRRgrp=&SuROrg=&SMRRgrp=&SMROrg=&plec