

Papua's Fallen Leaders

Carmel Budiardjo

Anyone who emerges as a leader of the West Papuan people is setting out on a dangerous path

Since the murder of cultural leader and activist Arnold Ap in April 1984 and the kidnap and murder of Theys Hijo Eluay, chairman of the Papuan Presidium Council, in November 2001, Papuans who have emerged as leaders have had their lives cut short by assassins from the security forces. Democracy in Indonesia has not changed Jakarta's treatment of West Papua.

The Assassination of Cultural Activist Arnold Ap

Arnold Ap was the curator of the Anthropological Museum in Jayapura and a member of a group of musicians called Mambesak, who promoted traditional Papuan music and broadcast a popular weekly program on the local radio. Ap was arrested by troops of the elite corps Kopassandha (now known as Kopassus) on 23 November 1983. After being interrogated and subjected to maltreatment, Ap, with four other detainees, was transferred to the headquarters of the regional military command. A month later, the five men were handed over to the intelligence officer of the local police.

When he heard that Ap was under arrest, the rector of Cenderawasih University in Jayapura temporarily dismissed him as curator on the grounds that he had been arrested on suspicion of subversion. When the Indonesian daily *Sinar Harapan* reported that Ap's family were being denied contact, the newspaper was publicly reprimanded.

After being held in police and military custody for three months, Ap was transferred to the public prosecution authorities, creating the impression that formal charges would be laid. On 14 April 1984, he was seen on campus being escorted by an officer. A week later it was

announced that he and four other detainees had escaped from prison, but this so-called escape had been arranged by the authorities. Military authorities regarded Ap as 'extremely dangerous' because of the activities of his Mambesak players and wanted him sentenced to death or given a life sentence, but they couldn't find the necessary evidence for him to be charged in court.

On 21 April, a Papuan police officer unlocked the cell doors of the five detainees and ordered them out. They were driven by a Kopassandha officer to a coastal base camp. One of the detainees managed to escape and later fled to Papua New Guinea where he described what had happened. The remaining detainees were told to swim out to a boat. One was struck on the head, stabbed in the neck and thrown into the sea. The others, including Arnold Ap, took shelter in a cave. Four days later, when Ap left the cave to urinate, the area was surrounded by elite troops. He was shot three times in the stomach and stabbed in the chest. He was taken to a hospital where, according to a nurse, he said that if he died his ring should be given to his wife. Other hospital staff said that he was dead on arrival.

Arnold Ap's attempts to foster the traditional arts and crafts of the Papuan people as a way of safeguarding their identity and enhancing their dignity was not acceptable to the security forces, and was even seen as a threat to their integration within the fold of the Indonesian Republic; for this he paid with his life.

The Mysterious Death of Dr Tom Wainggai

Dr Thomas Wainggai was a lecturer at Cenderawasih University who made no secret of his rejection of West Papua's annexation as a province of Indonesia. On 14 December 1988, he led a ceremony at the Mandala Stadium in Jayapura to unfurl the *Kejora*, the Morning Star flag, replacing the Indonesian red-and-white flag which had been pulled down. The event was attended by scores of people, including Protestant ministers. Dr Wainggai proclaimed the establishment of the West Melanesian Republic. While the ceremony was in progress, troops charged the crowd, beating many of those present.

Many people were rounded up and charged with rebellion (*makar*). Dr Wainggai was found guilty of rebellion and sentenced to twenty years. His wife Teruka was sentenced to eight years for sewing the flag, while others at the ceremony were sentenced, some up to six years, for handing out song sheets. When Dr Wainggai's trial began, large crowds gathered outside the courthouse, eager to follow the proceedings. In order to

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prevent further demonstrations, the trial was moved out of Jayapura.

In January 1990, Dr Wainggai and his wife were moved from Jayapura to prisons in Jakarta; he was taken to Cipinang Prison while she ended up in Tangerang Prison on the outskirts of the capital. Teruka Wainggai was released in 1993, after serving half her sentence.

In March 1996, it was reported that Dr Wainggai had died in prison. According to reports from the prison shortly before his death, he complained of severe pains in the stomach. Fearing that his food had been tampered with, he refused to eat the prison food but his condition failed to improve. On 14 March, his condition worsened; he was taken to a police prison but was found dead on arrival. His family called for an autopsy by the International Red Cross but this was refused. The prison doctor said that he had died from a heart attack but few people were prepared to believe this.

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There were several days of confusion about where Dr Wainggai should be buried. The army wanted the funeral to take place in Jakarta, fearing that large crowds would gather in Jayapura to pay their last respects. However, perhaps fearing that this would create greater problems, the army returned the body to Jayapura. When the coffin arrived at Sentani airport, a large crowd of people were waiting, intending to carry the coffin the 35 km to Cenderawasih University so Dr Wainggai's former colleagues could pay their last respects. However, the coffin was transferred from the aircraft to an ambulance and driven away at high speed. This so infuriated the crowds that they vented their anger by attacking government buildings, burning vehicles and pelting shops with stones. The unrest continued for several hours and, according to *Republika*, the Jakarta daily, Abepura was 'in control of the protestors for an hour or more with protestors carrying banners bearing the words "OPM Freedom" and "West Melanesian Freedom"'.

On the day of the funeral, thousands gathered outside the Wainggai family home where the funeral service was conducted. A huge crowd followed the cortege to the Kayubatu cemetery. Commenting on the unrest, Bishop Munninghoff at the Jayapura diocese warned that the situation in the province was 'highly combustible' and could easily ignite. On 20 March, *Republika* wrote: 'We could face yet more trouble in the coming days if, like East Timor, this most easterly province turns into an international issue'.

The Assassination of Theys Hijo Eluay

In his early days, Theys Hijo Eluay was a member of Golkar, the official party during the Suharto era; in August 1969, he was a signatory of the Act of Free Choice which unanimously—under

extreme coercion from the military—voted to remain within the Indonesian republic.

Following the fall of Suharto, which ushered in a period of greater freedom, the Papuan people held a widely supported congress in early 2000. This was followed by a second Papuan Congress in May and June of that year, which was attended by many thousands of people from across the territory, who voiced strong support for the idea of Papuan independence. The congress created an executive body called the Papuan Presidium Council (PDP). Theys Eluay, a tribal chief and a highly-respected community leader, was elected head of the PDP. Although the PDP had decided to pursue the path of dialogue rather than violence, army intelligence set up a special taskforce, which targeted members of the PDP, including Theys.

On 10 November 2001, Theys received an invitation to a celebration of Indonesia's Heroes' Day at the headquarters of Kopassus in Hamadi, on the outskirts of Jayapura. On the way home, his car was ambushed; Theys' driver was forced to flee and the car was driven away. The driver, Aristoteles Masoka, rushed back to Kopassus headquarters to report what had happened. After entering the complex, he was never seen again.

On the following day, Theys' body was discovered some fifty kilometres from the place of his abduction, in an upturned vehicle that had been found close to a ravine, creating the impression of an accident. The victim's face was black and his tongue was hanging out, which suggested strangulation, and an autopsy concluded that he had died of suffocation. His funeral was attended by more than ten thousand people coming from all over West Papua.

News that Theys had died under suspicious circumstances led to outrage not only in West Papua but also from the international community, which forced the Indonesian authorities to bring those held responsible to trial. Seven Kopassus officers were tried, found guilty and sentenced to derisory sentences of three or three and a half years, while a senior Indonesian army officer hailed the convicted men as 'heroes'. Nothing was ever established about who had ordered the crime.

The Murder of Kelly Kwalik

The most recent of Papua's fallen leaders is Kelly Kwalik who was fatally shot on 16 December 2009, shortly before the end of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's first term as president.

Kwalik died from loss of blood after being shot in the thigh by members of the infamous police anti-terror unit, Densus 88, a unit that has received training in the United States. Initially it was reported that the wound only 'pierced his skin', meaning that they were not life-threatening. The results of the autopsy have not been made public and calls for an investigation have been ignored so the chances of anyone being called to account are remote, given the impunity enjoyed by Indonesian security forces for decades.

Kwalik's sister-in-law Yosepha Alomang and other relatives were denied access to his body. 'Why was he shot to death?' Yosepha asked. 'He was not a thief. You police did not search for him in the jungle but killed him at his home.' Rev. Herman Saud, former chairman of the General Synod of the Papuan Protestant church (GKI), said that Kwalik should have been taken into custody and asked to explain what happened. 'Central and local governments should have the courage to enter into dialogue with those on the other side of the fence because they too (are) citizens of this country.'

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Keletus Kelly Kulalok Kwalik was from the Tsinga people, part of the Amungme tribe. The Amungme people lived in the mountain region which has since been taken over by the US mining company PT Freeport-Indonesia, whose operations have turned their mountain into a crater. The devastation caused across Timika by Freeport was always an integral part of Kwalik's resistance to West Papua's annexation by Indonesia. He studied at a Catholic teachers' college before joining the Papuan freedom organisation OPM (*Organisasi Papua Merdeka*) in 1975. He held various command positions in the movement in Timika and in 2007 became head of TPN/OPM, the OPM's military wing.

In 1977, major Indonesian military operations were conducted in the Central Highlands, an area dominated by Freeport's mining operations. Resistance fighters under Kwalik's leadership took action against the company; their most successful strike caused the destruction of a section of the pipe taking the copper from the Grasberg mine to Amamapare on the coast, and huge financial losses to the company. This led to retaliatory operations by

security forces, forcing villagers to flee their homes and causing much loss of life.

Kwalik attracted international attention in 1996, when a team of anthropologists from Cambridge University on an expedition in West Papua were kidnapped by the OPM in Mapnduma and held hostage for five months. Although the International Red Cross (ICRC) was planning to handle the prisoners' release, the organisation came under pressure from a Kopassus commander, Prabowo Subianto, son-in-law of President Suharto, to withdraw from the area and leave the military in charge. When a helicopter arrived to collect the hostages, some villagers approached, thinking that ICRC personnel were on board. Instead armed men opened fire, killing several people on the ground. Kwalik had fled, having been warned of a betrayal, and the hostages were met by Kopassus soldiers. Both before and after the hostages' release, there were reports of the killing of villagers. One of the hostages later told a Dutch newspaper that they had 'met entire village communities, men, women and children, on the run.'


During the crisis, TAPOL had called on Kwalik to release the hostages but Kwalik wanted to draw attention to Papua's neglected struggle. Indeed for the first time newspapers around the world took a critical look at conditions in West Papua and its annexation by Indonesia in 1963. The fate of a small group of foreigners had aroused significant international interest while thousands of Papuans had died in numerous incidents since 1963 without the international community batting an eyelid.

Since 2002, there have been several attacks by gunmen on personnel working for Freeport, resulting in several deaths, including of foreign employees. On each occasion, the military have blamed the OPM under Kwalik's leadership, without acknowledging the need for an investigation. Following an incident July 2009, when an Australian employee of Freeport was killed, the police chief of Papua, General F.X. Bagus Ekodanto, met Kwalik and was assured that he was not responsible for the shooting. However, a few days later the military commander of the Cenderawasih military command said that the shooting 'looked like' the work of Kelly Kwalik.

Finally, the police anti-terrorist unit Densus 88 attacked Kwalik in his home, shooting and fatally injuring him. Hundreds of people lined the route from the Mimika legislative building, where the body had lain in state, to the cemetery to mourn Kwalik's passing.

Shortly before his death, Kwalik said:

In the thirty-four years I have been defending this forest and country, I have climbed many hills and mountains, I have walked many valleys and wetlands. For thirty-four years I have defended the forest, I have crossed many lakes, rivers and seas. I have endured many days that have baked my skin, I have endured the cold and freezing of my body from snow, to defend our glorious heritage and to restore justice so that truth, love and peace will reign in our glorious land.

Now I pray, and I shout with all my breath: 'My God, take away all the copper, gold, oil and gas, fish, all the animals and other things that make this island rich. But all the things you have given us, take them away and give us only what we need today and give us tomorrow what we need then. 

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A selection from the Youth of Gaza series

Jessie Boylan

Jessie Boylan is a photomedia artist, documentary photographer, community radio producer and freelance journalist based in Melbourne. Jessie believes in photography's capacity to create change and educate people about human rights and social and environmental injustices. She worked in Palestine and Israel documenting the aftermath of the 2008-09 Israeli war on Gaza; the experience of Gazan youth; and the plight of internally displaced Palestinian Bedouins in Israel. She also spent six months working for Inter Press Service reporting and documenting in remote regions in Mozambique, Malawi and Tanzania. Since 2005 Jessie has been continuing a body of work around the impact of uranium mining, atomic weapons testings and the nuclear industry on Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia from the 1950s until today.

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