



West Papua's bid to join the MSG

Dan McGarry daily post Vanuatu 22/2/18

In a brief message yesterday, Vanuatu Foreign Minister Ralph Regenvanu responded to an Indonesian spokesman's claims by Indonesia's First Secretary for Political Affairs in Australia that West Papua's 'game is up'.

Radio New Zealand reported earlier this week that Mr Sade Bimantara said that the "United Liberation Movement for West Papua's bid to be a full member of the Melanesian Spearhead group has reached a dead end."

In the interview with RNZI's Johnny Blades, Mr Bimantara opined "I don't think they qualify to be a full member of the MSG. They are not a state, and as opposed to Kanaks, they are not on the C24 (UN) Decolonisation Committee, they are not on the list, West Papua. And also the separatist group does not obtain full support from all the West Papuans. And West Papua and Papua is also politically free, so there's no reason for the MSG to accept them as full members."

This was disputed yesterday by Vanuatu's Foreign Minister. In an email exchange with the Daily Post, Mr Regenvanu wrote, "Well, that's for the MSG Leaders to decide once the application is presented to them."

"Technically, the ULMWP can meet the new criteria just agreed upon." The issue, he wrote, would not be decided by the technicalities outlined by Indonesia's spokesman. "The question is only whether a political compromise can be achieved by the MSG Leaders before the next Summit at which the application for membership will be considered."

"Vanuatu is working on achieving this political compromise," he concluded.

Mr Regenvanu has been an outspoken supporter of West Papuan Independence movement. One of his last acts as Lands Minister before he took up the Foreign Affairs portfolio was to facilitate a grant of land to provide the United Liberation Movement for West Papua a permanent headquarters in Port Vila.

A ULMWP statement following the announcement of Mr Regenvanu's appointment to the portfolio said that it "is certainly a very effective state policy closely linked to the direction of the effective support of... Vanuatu for the West Papuan independence struggle."

JOURNALIST'S EXPULSION FROM INDONESIA'S PAPUA REGION

<http://tabloidjubi.com/eng/rsfs-decries-journalists-expulsion-indonesias-papua-region/Feb8>



Illustration

Jakarta, Jubi/RSF –

After the BBC's Indonesia editor was expelled from the country's easternmost Papua region last weekend over a tweet, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) again urges the Indonesian authorities to allow journalists to report freely in the troubled region, which continues to be an information black hole.

An Australian journalist based in Jakarta since 2006, the BBC's Rebecca Henschke got a special permit to visit Papua with a crew to cover a military aid operation, but was arrested and expelled, shortly after arriving, on the grounds that she had "hurt the feelings" of soldiers in a tweet.

Accompanied by a photo of foodstuffs, the offending tweet said: "This is the aid coming in for severely malnourished children in Papua – instant noodles, super sweet soft drinks and biscuits."

Henschke was one of several foreign journalists allowed to go to Papua to cover the military operation, aimed at relieving a malnutrition crisis exacerbated by a measles epidemic that has killed more than 70 children. Foreign journalists are not usually let into Papua, an impoverished region where separatist movements are active.

It is intolerable that foreign reporters are still banned from Papua," said Daniel Bastard, the head of RSF's Asia-Pacific desk. "All Rebecca Henschke did was send a photo taken in the field. This arbitrary decision by the Indonesian military gives the impression that they are acting as a state within the state, especially with regard to Papua.

"Must we remind President Joko Widodo of his promise to open up the region to the media? If he wants to maintain a minimum of credibility, he must give some clear evidence that he is doing this."

In his search for a strategy for restoring peace in Papua, the president (also known as "Jokowi") said in 2015 that he would review the restrictions that in practice prevent journalists from visiting Papua. But, three years later, the media's ability to work there seems to depend as much as ever on military approval.

Defending Henschke's expulsion, a military spokesman in Papua said her photo showed commercial food products, not the supplies brought by the military. Henschke later deleted her original tweet and posted another saying: *"Adding important NOTE: Other sources say this is NOT aid but normal supplies. Huge relief effort underway here."*

Because of the serious media freedom violations in its two easternmost provinces, Papua and West Papua, Indonesia is still ranked no higher than 124th out of 180 countries in RSF's 2017 World Press Freedom Index.

Question of West Papuan Membership Lingers

<https://thediplomat.com/2018/02/at-melanesian-spearhead-group-the-question-of-west-papuan-membership-lingers/>

By Grant Wyeth February 16, 2018

The MSG will deliberate the United Liberation Movement for West Papua's application, but some worry about angering Indonesia.

This week, the Papua New Guinea capital of Port Moresby hosted the 21st summit of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), the first since June 2015. While addressing a number of regional and mutually consequential concerns, the dominant issue of summit was the potential membership of the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP).

The MSG was established in 1988 as a forum for cooperation on issues of regional importance to the Melanesian states and peoples. The membership of the MSG consists of the four sovereign Melanesian states — Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu — as well as the Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS), a political grouping in New Caledonia that seeks independence from France.

Alongside these full members, Indonesia has associate membership status, and the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) and Timor Leste both have observer status. Indonesia's inclusion in the MSG first as an observer in 2012, then as an associate member in 2015, is based on its claims of having a Melanesian population of 11 million people distributed over five of its 34 provinces. While the provinces of West Papua and Papua are recognized as being regions of Melanesian ethnicity, there remains some debate among anthropologists and linguists over classification of the inhabitants of the Maluku Islands and other parts of eastern Indonesia.

Regardless of the specifics, the MSG saw the inclusion of Indonesia as a participant in the forum as an opportunity to engage Jakarta on their concerns about human rights abuses in West Papua. Their participation also provided a formal international forum where the Indonesian government and ULMWP are able to hold discussions outside domestic constraints. Since both parties have begun attending the MSG, the issue of West Papuan independence has come to dominate the forum's agenda.

Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and FLNKS all remain staunch supporters of the West Papuan independence movement. Both Vanuatu and Solomon Islands have used their time at the United Nations General Assembly to highlight human rights concerns, and advocate on behalf of the West Papuan independence movement. The government of Vanuatu recently donated the ULMWP an office building in Port Vila, giving the organization great access to the MSG's secretariat which is also based in the Vanuatu capital. Fiji and PNG maintain greater political and economic interaction with Indonesia, and have pursued a less forceful posture on the issue than the other two Melanesia states.

Prior to this week's summit, there was an expectation that the MSG may make the bold move of granting ULMWP full membership to the forum. The participation of FLNKS sets a precedent that organizations which are not sovereign states are able to ascend to full membership in the MSG. The ULMWP have been pursuing this goal since 2013, much to the annoyance of Indonesia which does not wish to give the organization international credibility and increased momentum.

Previously, application for membership by the ULMWP compelled the MSG into developing new guidelines that any applicants would need to comply with in order to ascend to full membership. This has resulted in the ULMWP unifying all West Papuan pro-independence groups under the one umbrella organization, reforming its leadership structures to form executive, legislative and judicial operations, and creating formal agendas reflecting the movement's short-, medium-, and long-term political and social aspirations.

As a result of this compliance, ULMWP's membership application was submitted to the MSG secretariat for deliberation again this week. There has been no timeframe given for a decision. However, during the MSG forum, Prime Minister Carlot Salwai of Vanuatu reminded the forum that the MSG original vision was one driven by desire to achieve decolonization and self-determination throughout the Melanesian region. Sending a strong signal

that Vanuatu would be pushing for full membership for the West Papuan group.

Yet with PNG and Fiji's reluctance to disturb Indonesia, full membership for the ULMWP may be considered a move too antagonistic towards Jakarta at this stage. However, the potential for ULMWP to be promoted from its current observer status to associate member — putting it on par with Indonesia's status — may be deemed a more appropriate course of action. This incremental approach could be deemed to still be in line with the MSG's original vision as stated by Salwai, but prevent a movement that would be too radical by Jakarta.

ASIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION - URGENT APPEALS PROGRAMME

Urgent Appeal Case: AHRC-UAU-001-2018 8 February 2018

Dear Friends,

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has received updated information regarding the Banyuwangi district court's sentence of Mr. Heri Budiawan alias Budi Pego, an environment activist, to 10-months imprisonment. In addition, three other activists as well as community members also have been named as suspects, and an investigation is still going on. Budi Pego along with the local community of Sumberagung village conducted advocacy efforts to stop the mining operation in Tumpang Pitu, Banyuwangi regency, East Java province. They called for the protection of the environment, but were criminally charged with crimes against the State. Budi and the other three activists /community members were falsely accused of putting and circulating the Communism logo (hammer and sickle) on their anti-mining banners.

UPDATED INFORMATION:

On Tuesday, 23 January 2018, the judges of Banyuwangi district court sentenced Mr. Heri Budiawan (also known as Budi Pego) on the charges of spreading Communist ideology. The judges sentenced him to 10-month imprisonment, a much lower sentence than the prosecutor's petition of seven years.

The case began on 4 March 2017, when Budi Pego and the local community of Sumberagung village, Pesanggrahan sub-district organized a peaceful protest, displaying banners of "reject mining" against the Bumi Suksesindo Company (PT. Bumi Suksesindo/PT BSI) in Tumpang Pitu, Banyuwangi regency. Budi Pego and the local community displayed the banners along the road of Pulau Merah until the Pesanggrahan sub-district office. Suddenly, at 12 p.m., five unknown persons carrying cameras approached the community members, and gave two banners to them. The unknown persons requested the community to display these two banners as well, and then took some pictures of them.

According to some witnesses, it is impossible for Budi Pego or the locals to put the Communist hammer and sickle logo on the banners, as the police officers guarding the protest would immediately have arrested them. This did not occur.

Moreover, the public prosecutor was not able to present the two Communist banners as evidence during the trial process in Banyuwangi district court. The judges have ignored this lack of evidence and merely considered the expert testimony presented by the public prosecutors, while ignoring the expert testimony presented by the public defenders. The expert presented by the public defenders stated that the hammer and sickle in the banner shown in the court through video is not enough and cannot be included as a proper evidence without the two original banners. The expert added that the local community involved in the peaceful anti-mining protest had not said a single word about Communism or Marxism.

Besides Mr. Budi Pego, in total there are three more local environment activists who have been named as suspects: Mr. Cipto Andreas, Mr. Trimanto and Ms. Dwiratasari. The police charged them using article 107a of Law No 27 of 1999 on the revision of the Criminal Law related to crimes against the State. In Article 107 a, it states that "Anyone who publicly violates the

law with oral, written and/or through any media, disseminates or teaches Communism/Marxism-Leninism in any kind of forms is punishable by a maximum of 12 (twelve) years imprisonment."

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Communism is still used as a tool to restrict or even criminally charge human rights defenders who critique and advocate against the government policy not in favor of human rights and rule of law. Last year the AHRC also noted human rights violations committed by anti communist mobs against human rights groups, for instance forced dissolution and brutal attack against public discussion organized by the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation, Jakarta Legal Aid and association of victims and family of victims 1965-1966 massacre (AHRC-UAC-130-2017). We also documented and reported harassment and forced dissolution of movie screenings and workshops organized by civil society in some provinces of Indonesia such as West Java, Yogyakarta and East Java province.

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Please write to the authorities listed below. Ask them to ensure that all criminal charges against Mr. Heri Budiawan, known as Budi Pego, an environment activist and a villager of Sumber Agung village, Banyuwangi, East Java Province, must be evaluated by the High Court of East Java province and the Supreme Court under fair trial principles. We also urge the police to stop any criminal charges against three other environment activists and also local community members, considering that under Indonesian law number 32 of 1999 on Environmental Protection, article 66 states, "Everybody struggling for a right to proper and healthy environment may not be charged with criminal or civil offense." Furthermore, the government must immediately conduct legal audit upon the mining company operated in Tumpang Pitu, and the audit must be transparent, accountable and accessible for public (in particular local community) and media. Local community's input and information about environmental damages due to mining operation in Tumpang Pitu must also be considered by the government.

The AHRC will write a separate letter to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers and the Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, calling for their intervention into this matter.

In wake of measles epidemic lawmakers, military discuss how to counter fake news on Papua

Tirto.id - January 29, 2018M. Ahsan Ridhoi –

A working committee meeting on Monday January 29 between the House of Representatives (DPR) Commission I, TNI (Indonesian military) chief Air Marshal Hadi Tjahjanto and Defense Minister Ryamizard Ryacudu has discussed the issue of Papuan independence.



Commission I deputy chairperson Hanafi Rais from the National Mandate Party (PAN) said that one of the things discussed was preventing the Free Papua Movement (OPM) from rallying support from the international community.

"Our position is that we want the government, specifically the defense minister and the TNI chief to pay serious and ongoing attention to this. Not just based on particular cases, but continuous and ongoing", said Rais at the DPR complex in Senayan, Central Jakarta on Monday January 29.

During the meeting, according to Rais, Commission I expressed its appreciation to the TNI for providing immediate assistance to Papua during the recent measles epidemic. According to Rais, this is one of the ways to prevent separatism in Papua.

According to Rais, the measles epidemic represents a non-traditional threat to Indonesia's sovereignty which can be taken advantage of by the OPM and pro-independence groups to portray the Indonesian government in a bad light. "So, of course in confronting non-traditional threats such as this we consider the steps taken by the TNI to have been quite effective. Because they poured in lots of direct humanitarian aid, healthcare, military resources and healthcare workers", said Rais.

In addition to this, according to Rais, the TNI chief, defense minister and Commission I also discussed how to counter overseas support for the free Papua movement, particularly from South-Pacific countries, New Zealand, Australia and the United Nations.

"We in the DPR urge the government to use smart power. We can't just use soft power or just defense, and we can't just rely on hard power because this involves the physical use of troops, we must use smart power", said Rais.

The smart power referred to by Rais is countering fake news (hoax) about Papua that is often spread by pro-free Papua groups to paint the Indonesian government in a negative light. Related to this, Ryacudu stated his strong objection to the involvement of other countries in the Papua issue.

"In the past I've spoken in Australia, to Australia, to the Solomon Islands, I have never meddled in or interfered with the affairs of other countries. If other countries want to interfere in my country, I don't

want that. That's what I say. I won't compromise on this", said Ryacudu at the DPR complex on Monday.

The working meeting also discussed other issues including revisions to the anti-terrorism law, particularly the involvement of the TNI in combating terrorism.

[Translated by James Balowski for the Indoleft News Service. The original title of the article was "Raker Komisi I, Menhan dan Panglima TNI Bahas Papua Merdeka".]

Visit of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Should Bring Changes

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) deeply appreciates the visit to the Republic of Indonesia of Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. It took place between 4 to 7 February 2018. As a regional human rights organization in Asia, we work closely with our partners and various civil society groups in Indonesia. We expect that your visit will bring changes and enhance the protection, fulfilment and promotion of human rights in Indonesia. The AHRC is also thankful that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is willing to send a mission to visit Papua and the West Papua Provinces to learn and see further human rights situations on the ground. We welcome this progressive diplomacy. Accountability is urgently needed. The AHRC has already described and highlighted the human rights situation in Indonesian, including PAPUA in our Open Letter on submission on criminal justice reform and human rights



UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein during his visit in Indonesia.

The AHRC is grateful to the Indonesian Government for giving and providing open access to the large civil society (human rights groups), victims and the families of victims of various human rights cases. There was direct dialog and communication with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein during his visit

in Indonesia. We note that Government openness is an important milestone, which should be immediately followed up with a concrete policy and program on the enhancement of human rights standards in Indonesia.

Therefore, we do hope that the Government of Indonesia is not merely interpreting the visit of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights as normative and ordinary diplomacy. The Government should knowingly consider that human rights must be incorporated and included in every Government policy, particularly those related to national development. It is common knowledge that since President Joko Widodo's inauguration in October 2014, development of infrastructure and the economy is his major concern. In the last two years, massive infrastructure developments such as roads, ports and airports have been constructed in various provinces of Indonesia, including Papua. Under President Joko Widodo, the Government issued Presidential Decree No. 3, 2016 regarding strategic projects. This encompasses the following: 52 railway projects, 19 train projects, 17 airport projects, 13 port projects, 10 clean water projects and 60 reservoirs.

Ensuring that human rights are included in the Policy of Development is very important, as development will be nothing without human rights. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stated this in his opening remarks:

"As I said at the Jakarta Conversation Regional Human Rights Conference on Monday, development can certainly bring with it access to fundamental services and goods that vastly improve many people's well-being. But, if they cannot voice their concerns and participate in decisions, the resulting development may not increase their welfare. I urge the Government of Indonesia and the corporations involved in the extraction of natural resources, plantations and large-scale fisheries, to abide by the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights by ensuring that business activities are not carried out in violation of people's rights."

However, to date, we have not seen the Government incorporating human rights in its Policy on development and economic investment. There are instances of human rights violations which occurred while the Government was pushing these massive developmental projects: 1# Development of New Yogyakarta International Airport in Kulon Progo Regency; the development of the Airport continues despite lack of an environmental permit and with rampant violence (for further chronology: AHRC-UAC-202-2017); 2# Development of the West Java International Airport (BIJB) in Kertajati, West Java Province. Ten villages in Kertajati sub-district had been effectively dispossessed to facilitate the development of the West Java International Airport. (For further chronology: AHRC-UAC-148-2016); 3# Development of Geothermal Power Plant (PLTPB) conducted by the Sejahtera Alam Energy Company which operates in Slamet Mountain, Central Java Province. Despite massive protests from environmental activists and local communities and demands to protect the environment in Slamet Mountain, the Government, in particular the Police, did not address the matter. The Police forcibly dispersed a peaceful protest, arresting 24 protesters (for further chronology: AHRC-UAC-195-2017).

All the above-mentioned examples are just a few cases of human rights violations that occurred under President Joko Widodo's administration. We do believe that the examples are representative enough. They explain the

form and the pattern of widespread human rights violations due to a lack of human rights standards within Government Policy on development and investment.

In addition, the AHRC also received information that land conflict is still dominating a number of human rights violations in Indonesia. We take as reference the data of the Indigenous People's Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN), a national human rights organization. In 2017 the number of land conflict cases was 659 and resulted in 261 indigenous people being criminalized.

To enhance its stance, the Government should re-evaluate its policy priorities on human rights cases which remain unaddressed until now. Past human rights abuses which took place under former dictator Suharto remain unresolved. Consider the 1965-1966 Massacre. Although there has been some information related to the case, such as the US Embassy Document on the alleged involvement of the Indonesian Army, it has not been ultimately taken into consideration. Religious intolerance needs to be recognized and resolved. Minority religions and beliefs must be treated equally. The investigation into the murder of Munir Said Thalib, a prominent human rights activist, poisoned by an agent of the Indonesian Intelligence Agency (BIN) remains at a standstill. Included must be current development in the human rights situation in Aceh and other Provinces. They must be the main priority that the Government deals with.

Therefore, the AHRC is calling for the Indonesian Government to open access to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, especially his special, mission visit to Papua. We should like to emphasize that President Widodo's administration critically implement recommendations of the latest Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of 2017. Government needs to review all of its regulations, both local and national. They must ensure that the regulations are not in violation of International Human Rights Standards. Indonesia is a state party to key international human rights Treaties. Government should be acutely aware that human rights are part of their obligation within the Duty of Care for their citizens. It is mandatory that Government fulfils this duty. Human Rights should not be treated simply as a tool of diplomacy to protect the image of Indonesia in the international forum of relationships.

Church in Indonesia maps out future for indigenous Papuans

Ryan Dagur, Jakarta Indonesia February 8, 2018

New website aims for government to protect tribal land from growth of concessions for mining and palm plantations

The Catholic Church in Papua province and human rights groups have mapped the territories of indigenous people

to encourage the Indonesian government to protect their environment.

The coalition launched the matapapua.org website on Feb. 5 with maps of territories and locations that have become concession areas for mining and palm plantations.



Sacred Heart Father Anselmus Amo, who heads Merauke Archdiocese's Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission, said they wanted the government to recognize indigenous people's land so as not to issue permits that engulfed their environment.

"The indigenous people and rich natural resources in Papua are not merely an object to be drained for the sake of the economy alone, whether in the name of development or the greed of large investors," Father Amo told ucanews.com.

He said the involvement of the archdiocese and dioceses in Papua in this program was part of a commitment to "defend indigenous people against the onslaught of investors entering through the government and escorted by security forces, both army and police."

In Merauke, Father Amo said, the Marind, Mandobo, Yei and Auyu tribal communities are threatened by the activities of palm oil companies.

"Their food and medicinal plants, as well as animals and plants that they normally consume, are also threatened," he said. "Water is also polluted. The big floods are now threatening because the forest is gone."

Franky Yafet Leonard, executive director of Pusaka, an NGO focusing on indigenous rights, said many concessions in Papua overlapped indigenous people's territories and did not involve them in the issuance of permits.

This, Leonard said, violates the 2011 Papua special autonomy law stating that the provision of customary land for any purpose must go through consultation with indigenous peoples.

"However, the government and corporations annex and seize land without the consent of indigenous people," he said.

Leonard said mining concessions occupy an area of 9 million hectares, followed by logging concessions at 7 million hectares and plantations at 2.1 million hectares.

In 2017, he said, the government issued new licenses for plantations covering 53,806 hectares and mining covering 63,858 hectares.

The government also transferred 2,318 hectares of protected forest on Botak Mountain, South Manokwari, into a production forest.

"This decision allegedly accommodates the interests of one of the sand mining companies," Leonard said.

Leonard said he hoped the mapping program would make the government more careful about issuing permits.

Bambang Supriyano, general director of the social forestry and environmental partnership at the Environment Ministry, welcomed the initiative.

"In April, we will discuss the issue of customary forests in several provinces including Papua in order to protect indigenous people," he said.

"The mapping results will be one of our references."

Charles Tawaru, an indigenous Papuan who is also active in Papua Forest Watch, wants the government to legitimize the territories under the authority of indigenous communities.

"It's important as this will be used as guideline. When there is an attempt to annex indigenous people's land, we will have something to say," he said

UN Human Rights Commissioner Comments

By Sheany on 9:30 am Feb 08, 2018

Jakarta. The United Nations' human rights chief urged the government of Indonesia to address unresolved

cases of past human rights violations and halt the death penalty, after a three-day visit to the archipelago this week.



United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. (Reuters Photo/Denis Balibouse)

During a press conference in Jakarta on Wednesday (07/02), Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein touched on several critical issues concerning human rights in Indonesia, including blasphemy law, capital punishment and persistent gaps in the protection of economic and social rights of Indonesians.

"I have expressed to the government my concerns about the implementation of the ill-defined blasphemy law, which has been used to convict members of minority religious or faith groups," Zeid said.

Zeid stressed the importance of a fair judicial process for everyone, especially in dealing with drug-related crimes, and highlighted that capital punishment is an ineffective deterrent that usually targets already disadvantaged communities.

"Shooting dead suspected drug offenders is not the way to tackle this problem. Everyone has the right to a fair judicial process," Zeid said.

Zeid began his visit on Monday at the invitation of the Indonesian government. He has held meetings with the country's top officials, including President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, and representatives of civil society and the country's national human rights institutions.

"I urge the Indonesian government to take steps toward accountability for gross human rights violations of the past," Zeid said.

He noted that Indonesia is still struggling to reckon with the terrible events of the past, including the 1965 anti-communist pogrom that killed at least 500,000 people, and said it is crucial to bring the perpetrators to justice and provide victims with long-overdue redress.

During the 2014 election campaign, Jokowi promised to resolve past violations of human rights, including rapes and killings during the May 1998 riots and the 1965-66 anti-communist mass killings. Evidently, those promises have yet to be realized.

According to Zeid, if Indonesia were to follow through in resolving past cases of human rights abuses, it could become a positive role model for other countries struggling to deal with their own dark past.

Zeid also urged the House of Representatives to pass the bills on recognition and protection of rights of indigenous people and protection for victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

He noted that despite continuous economic growth, many Indonesians have yet to benefit from the dividends, alluding to reports of farmers, workers and indigenous commu-

nities losing control over their land and natural resources to mining and logging by large corporations.

"There is a clear need for inclusive dialogue and consultation, and such projects must not be undertaken without the free, fair and informed consent of the affected communities," Zeid said.

On the draft revisions of the criminal code, which have attracted protests from human rights organizations and ordinary Indonesians, Zeid said the proposed amendments are "inherently discriminatory" and rebuked the appeal to local culture on which the argument was supposedly based.

The UN envoy expressed his deep concerns with extremist views playing out in the Indonesian political scene, and observed that there have been rising "strains of intolerance" across the archipelago.

Despite "dark clouds on the horizon," Zeid ended his remarks at the press conference on a positive note, expressing his beliefs that Indonesia will be able to survive the waves of intolerance that seem to have clouded the country's long-standing reputation.

"I am encouraged by the positive momentum and hope common sense and strong traditions of tolerance of the Indonesian people will prevail over populism and political opportunism," Zeid said.

Community Health Care Program for Asmat Tribe

WEDNESDAY, 07 FEBRUARY, 2018 | 10:00 WIB

TEMPO.CO, Jakarta - Following all out efforts involving several ministries, police and military, among others, measles outbreak and malnutrition problem in remote Asmat District in Papua Province, have finally been overcome.

Since the plague affected Asmat in September 2017, a total of 71 people, mostly children, had died due to malnutrition and measles outbreaks.

Based on data received from Asmat Humanitarian Task Force, until Jan. 30, there were still 26 inpatients in Asmat in which 19 people of them were treated in Asmat Regional Hospital, and seven patients were treated in the Hall of Indonesia Protestant Church of Asmat due to malnutrition.

Earlier, a total of 47 people had been treated in the church in which 40 people of them have returned home.

Health Minister Nila Moeloek on Jan. 31, 2018, said as many as 13,300 children in Asmat District, Papua Province have been vaccinated as an effort to control the epidemic of measles.

Not all sub-districts in Asmat District, however, get the vaccination due to difficult terrain.

The ministry has alternately deployed medical personnel and delivering aid packages every 10 days to handle measles and malnutrition in Asmat.

The medical personnel provided assistance in hospitals and church halls, Moeloek revealed.

"Some people have returned to their homes. However, if they do not get any health supervision from medical institutions, there could be recurrence of the disease," she explained.

The emergency situation has been considered overcome and now the Government is focusing on long-term community health care and improvement program in Asmat.

"We have reported to the President that we are now entering a stage of community health care and development there, because we have overcome the plague through an emergency response," Social Affairs Minister Idrus Marham said after accompanying President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) in a meeting with Seto Mulyadi, chairman of the Institute for the Protection of Indonesian Children (LPAI), at the Presidential Palace, in Jakarta, on Feb 5, 2018.

Minister Marham planned to visit Makassar, South Sulawesi, to discuss cooperation with the University of Hasanudin in community health care and improvement in Asmat. The university will send a team of doctors to Asmat.

The minister believes that the problem solving in Asmat District must be integrated, cross-sectoral, comprehensive, and sustainable.

A number of ministries should work together to solve the problems of infrastructure, environment, education, health and others in the area.

Besides, the problem handling should be based on cultural and regional characteristics, he added.

"The involvement of Indonesian National Military and Police relates to humanitarian operation. All people who help solve the Asmat's problems are heroes because we work together," he said.

Papua Provincial Police Chief Inspector General Boy Rafli Amar had earlier revealed that the number of people suffering from malnutrition in Asmat District of Papua had reached between 10 and 15 thousand.

He cited various factors that had contributed to cases of malnutrition in the district including its remote location; lack of access to nutritious food and health and transportation facilities; as well as low economic level.

"Some rivers depend on tidal waters, which makes it difficult for boats to pass through them at any time to distribute food," he explained.

Amar remarked that the community health centers (Puskesmas) in Asmat lack basic facilities, such as paramedics and medical doctors to head the center.

He called on the Police Headquarters' Health and Medical Center to send its physicians to health centers in Asmat.

"The young doctors program and internship in Papua is expected to fill the vacant posts, especially for the Puskesmas head," he pointed out.

According to the police chief, two to three thousand vials of measles vaccine are needed.

"For backup, we need some two thousand to three thousand vials of vaccines, so that we can continue to inoculate the kids in the near future," he remarked.

The Papua police and Cendrawasih military regional command will establish a health task force to map out areas that are prone to the diseases and visit the areas to address the problem.

"In some areas, we will trace it. We have information on the epidemics in some other areas, such as in the Bintang Mountains," he revealed.

The National Defense Forces (TNI) deployed several ships to provide transportation access to assist the TNI medical personnel operating in Asmat District.

The Indonesian military has considered the deployment of KRI Yos Sudarso as a hospital ship to help tackle measles epidemic and malnutrition in Asmat district of Papua, according to TNI Chief Air Marshal Hadi Tjahjanto.

The Military Chief, while visiting Asmat, ordered the integrated health task force to continue its services in Asmat until the next 270 days.

Hadi explained that the team has treated more than 600 children, who suffered from measles and malnutrition, during its humanitarian operation in Asmat.

It has given measles vaccine for 13,336 villagers, mostly toddlers, in 224 villages. The number of patients in Asmat hospital has dwindled.

Meanwhile, the central government has coordinated with the House of Representatives (DPR) to handle health problems in the hinterland areas of Asmat District.

"The health factor is not the only cause of malnutrition. There are many other downstream issues that trigger the problem," Minister Moeloek said in a hearing with the Parliament in Jakarta, recently.

Moeloek held a consultation meeting with the members and leaders of Commission VIII, IX, and X of DPR RI.

She explained that the health factor contributed to 20 percent of malnutrition and measles cases in Asmat. Meanwhile, other factors such as environment cleanliness, socio-cultural factors, and genetic factors contribute to 40, 30, and 10 percent of the cases, respectively.

A Skeleton Wrapped in Skin

Gianrigo Marletta Tuesday 13 February 2018

Asmat, Papua, Indonesia -- The three-year-old skeleton wrapped in skin should otherwise have been a little girl. She was barely breathing, fighting for her life in a remote part of the jungle, as her parents helplessly looked on. I have seen plenty of extreme poverty in my

seven years as a journalist in Indonesia. Never have I seen a child in such a state.

The trip that took me to her started out in the usual whirlwind fashion. Six hours after covering the US secretary of defense's visit to Indonesia in the lavish halls of the presidential palace in Jakarta, I was on a seven-hour overnight flight to Papua with colleagues from text and photo.

We were headed to cover one of the most haunting stories any of us had yet experienced, and we were nervous because it was already saturated with firsts.

For the first time we were allowed to travel deep into Papua, to a remote region that normally has been off limits to Western journalists like us. When President Joko Widodo came to power in 2014, he adopted a more liberal approach in an effort to attract more foreign investment and ordered, among other things, that access to Papua be allowed for Western news outlets.

It took a while for the new approach to trickle down on the ground. But eventually it did -- when news began to spread in recent months that a measles outbreak in one of the most remote corners of Papua had killed dozens of children, the army invited us to go along with them to the area. We would become some of the first Western journalists to see the place in decades, and the army would get coverage of what it was doing to help the local population.

The trip offered another bonus -- usually Western journalists aren't allowed anywhere near military installations. So much so that I can't even go to the military airport to shoot the arrival of hostages freed in the Philippines, or the return of civilians' bodies arriving from a disaster zone.

And now here I was, embedded with the army and, eventually, actually flying in one of their helicopters. But more on that later.

First, a brief explanation of Papua's history. It's on the second largest island in the world -- New Guinea -- sitting just above the northern coast of Australia.

During the European colonial era, New Guinea was split in half: the eastern part belonged to the Germans and then the British and Australians and the western side was under Dutch rule.

Today, the island is still split in half, but the eastern side gained independence and became Papua New Guinea, while the Dutch side was taken over by Indonesia decades ago and became Papua province.

Papuans are distinctly different from other Indonesians, both culturally and in their genetic makeup, sharing more with Melanesians who are spread out across islands in the Pacific. Many West Papuans today consider themselves an occupied people (part of the reason it was closed to Western reporters for so long). There is a heavy Indonesian military presence as a low-level separatist insurgency burns on an island that is rich in natural resources but has a population so poor that some are actually starving to death.

Our night flight from Jakarta landed in Timika. We then hopped onto a seatless Cessna 208 Caravan prop plane, which gave us another thrill of sorts. Up until then, most of the stories that we had covered in Papua had been crashes of planes just like this, small seatless little birds of metal gliding over some of the world's densest jungle cover. When we got on and saw that the plane had only one pilot, we exchanged glances and smiled (we were all thinking the same thing). "Let's just hope we don't become the story," we said and settled in for the ride. To be honest, any fear we may have had was far outweighed by excitement. In today's world, there are very few places where one can go and be "the first." This was one of them -- we'd be among the first Westerners to see this corner of the globe in decades.

The plane glided over dense tropical jungle, which is one of Indonesia's last untouched forests (deforestation in Indonesia is the most rampant in the world). The thick network of large rivers below us served both as water supply for its thriving wilderness, but also as the only means of connection between villages in the remote region.

The pilot flew low for us so that we could get good aerial shots of the place, and after about an hour we landed in Agats - the tiny capital of Asmat district, the epicenter of the measles outbreak where the deaths of dozens of toddlers was causing untold grief for their parents.

"My personal last frontier," I thought as I got off the plane and took a look around. "Impenetrable, wild and far away. I've finally made it to the heart of Papua!"

To call Asmat extremely isolated is a bit of an understatement. The "airport" consisted of a strip of concrete and a shack. The entire region lies next to a river, the main way of getting around from village to village, on ground so swampy that everything is on stilts -- from shacks to paths. There are no cars.

Even though it's only about 100 miles (160 kilometres) away from Timika -- **the gateway to one of the world's biggest mines operated by US-based Freeport** -- to get to Asmat one has to use either a small chartered plane (which would cost \$2,000-3,000 to book), fly a commercial plane which doesn't operate daily, or travel by boat which would take about 10 hours. In short, it's expensive to travel to Asmat. Not many people can afford this kind of travel and so the outside world often doesn't know what's going on here.

We headed to the hospital as soon as we landed. If you could call it as such. It is the sole major medical facility for the entire Asmat district and is supposed to service nearly 130,000 people living in dozens of tiny villages along the river (A few tiny clinics in some villages are barely worthy of the name, staffed by overwhelmed nurses and no doctors). There is no lab. No operating room.

One young girl was lying on the ground in an exterior hallway. Her legs were thinner than the stand for an IV that was keeping her alive. A few metres from her head someone had parked a motorbike. Her eyes were open, but she was staring at nothing. I kept looking at

the motorbike, parked so close to her head. "That's just not right," I kept thinking. "There shouldn't be a motorbike parked next to her head."

"The hospital is full, so we had to move so many children to the church," we were told. So after the hospital we went to the church.

It was quickly becoming apparent that the measles outbreak wasn't the only story. **The underlying story here was malnourishment. These people are so poor that some are literally starving to death. A malnourished child will succumb to measles more easily than a well-fed one.**



The people living here, the Asmat tribe, are unlucky in that they are caught in between two worlds. They are descendants of people who used to live in the jungle, getting their food and medicine from it. They no longer do that. They now live in "villages" -- collections of feeble bamboo huts on stilts on the banks of the river.

Now most of their food consists of instant noodles that are brought in by boat to little "convenience stores" called "warung." The only problem is that there are hardly any jobs. It's hard to buy food when you have no money.

That reality came screaming out to us in a room by the hospital's entrance, where a father and mother stared down at a skeleton tightly wrapped in human skin. It was their three-year-old daughter, still breathing.

In my seven years working as a journalist in Indonesia, I have seen extreme poverty like this before. But never had I seen children in such condition. It just hit me in the stomach.

It was a very physical reaction -- I just wanted to throw up. I suppose it would have been even worse if I had been a parent. In moments like this -- when I witness something truly terrible -- my camera becomes my shield. It becomes a filter, protecting you from the reality in front, so that I can do my job and shoot the scene. And that's what I did. I shot that skeleton wrapped in skin that was supposed to be a three-year-old girl. And despite that shield, that image will stay with me for a long, long time.

I wasn't the only one shaken by it. Lots of colleagues from other news organizations later told me that that particular image is what prompted them to follow in our footsteps and report on the story as well.

Sending the harrowing footage took more than 14 hours with our satellite device. From 4:00 pm till seven the next morning I stared at my laptop while it did its best to upload my video. Something that in normal conditions would've taken less than 20 minutes. After that, it was time to go back out and shoot some more.

We spent the next day on tiny speedboats racing down the rivers, following the Indonesian military as it visited a remote village on stilts.

In all, we spent four nights in the region, but it will be a trip that I will remember for a long time. Flying out marked another first -- we flew out aboard a chopper of the military that wouldn't allow us anywhere near its installations for years.

But that's not what will stay with me. It will be the image of that little girl, clinging to life. We checked up on her before leaving. She was still alive, but her battle with death was nowhere near being over. I hope she made it in the end. It would soften a bit that image of her seared in my memory.

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