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from
Joe Collins on behalf of the Australia West Papua (Sydney)

Yours sincerely
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The Australia West Papua Association (Sydney) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to The Foreign Policy White Paper.

About the Australia West Papua Association (Sydney)

The Australia West Papua Association (AWPA) in Sydney is a human rights organisation focusing on the territory of West Papua. The West Papuan people face great challenges including ongoing human rights abuses, the exploitation of their natural resources with little or no benefit to themselves, the danger of becoming a minority in their own land and a HIV/AIDS epidemic.

AWPA uses the name “West Papua” to refer to the whole of the western half of the Island of New Guinea. However, “West Papua” at this time is divided into two provinces, Papua and West Papua. AWPA believes the issue of West Papua could eventually lead to an increase in major tension between Australia and Indonesia if the situation in West Papua continues to deteriorate.

Focus on West Papua.

Introduction.

The whole of the Island of New Guinea will always be strategically important to Australia and AWPA believes that the Australian Government should be doing all it can to help solve the ongoing conflict in one of our nearest neighbors. We would like to point out that it is now 54 years since Indonesia took over administration of the territory from the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) in 1963. The West Papuan people are still struggling for their right to self-determination, marching in the streets risking arrest and torture at the hands of the Indonesia’s security forces. West Papua as an issue is not going away.

The Australian Government points out that Indonesia is now and democracy and AWWA notes the great improvement in Indonesia since the fall of former President Suharto. However, this improvement has not translated into democracy in West Papua. Throughout the past year the Indonesian security forces cracked down on the numerous rallies called by Civil Society Organisations (CSO's) in West Papua with thousands of West Papuans arrested simply for taking part in the rallies. Although the majority of activists were eventually released, during the arrests activists were regularly beaten and in some cases faced torture. A number were also charged with treason. (A chronology of rallies and arrests are in AWWA's end of year report titled "West Papua 2016 Year in Review". Link below".

These arrests go against the principles laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states,

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. (Article 19)

Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. (Article 20)

It is in the interests of the Australian Government to have a stable region to our north but AWWA believes the policies of the Jakarta Government and the behavior of the Indonesian security forces in West Papua will lead to the very instability that the government is trying to avoid. This instability could raise tensions not only between Australia and Indonesia but also with other countries in the region. Papua New Guinea has a border with West Papua and other Melanesian and Pacific leaders have come under criticism from Jakarta for raising the issue at the United Nations.

Increasing support

There is increasing support for West Papua internationally and particularly in the Pacific region.

Seven Pacific leaders raised the issue of West Papua at the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September 2016. The Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu all raised concerns about the human rights situation in West Papua.

Vanuatu also raised the West Papuan issue at the High-Level Segment - 8th Meeting, 34th Regular Session Human Rights Council in Geneva. Vanuatu was also speaking on behalf off the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu. In his statement the H.E. Mr. Ronald Kay Warsal, Minister of Justice and Community Services of Vanuatu said that "the challenges of West Papua must be brought back to the agenda of the United Nations" (1 March 2017).

AWWA feels it's not necessary to go into the history of the issue of West Papua but can supply more information on the issue if required. However, the link below is to AWWA's end of year report on West Papua. The report details incidents of human rights abuses and events that occurred in West Papua during 2016. It is by no means exhaustive. However, the report should indicate to all that the issue of West Papua is not going away and has the potential to be a major cause of friction not only between Jakarta and Australia but with other countries in the region. <http://awpasydneynews.blogspot.com.au/2016/12/west-papua-report-2016-year-in-review.html>

Recommendations

AWWA (Sydney) believes that the Indonesian government could greatly improve the human rights situation on the ground in West Papua by controlling its military in the territory.

AWWA urges the Australian Government to re- think its policy of ties with the Indonesian military until such time that Indonesian military personnel involved in past human rights abuses are brought to justice and the culture of the Indonesian military becomes of an acceptable standard to both the Australian people and Australian military.

There are regular bilateral visits between Australia and Indonesia. AWWA believes that these bilateral visits present an opportunity for an open and frank exchange on how to improve the human rights situation in West Papua. Much of the discussion at these bilateral meetings concerns trade and security. The obvious

omission is human rights. AWPAs recommends that at all future bilateral visits between defense and foreign affairs officials, the human rights situation in West Papua should always be on the agenda

The Australian Government is a generous donor of aid to Indonesia. There are a number of Indigenous human rights NGOs in West Papua and the Australian Government can strengthen the human rights situation in West Papua by supporting these organisations with financial aid, capacity building and education. We recommended that human rights defenders working in human rights organisations in West Papua are funded to attend human rights and diplomacy courses in Australia and overseas. The West Papuan people have been calling on Jakarta for years to dialogue with their representatives and such programs (in the fields of human rights and diplomacy) can empower West Papuans to dialogue effectively with the Indonesian Government to the benefit of all.

Pacific Islands Forum

The 47th Pacific Islands Forum Meeting was held in the Federated States of Micronesia between the 8 - 10 September 2016.

West Papua was mentioned in the official Communiqué. From the Communiqué in relation to West Papua 18. Leaders recognized the political sensitivities of the issue of West Papua (Papua) and agreed the issue of alleged human rights violations in West Papua (Papua) should remain on their agenda. Leaders also agreed on the importance of an open and constructive dialogue with Indonesia on the issue.

At the previous forum meeting the PIF leaders requested Jakarta to allow a PIF fact-finding mission to West Papua. We urge the Australian Government (as a PIF member) to continue to request the Indonesian Government to allow a PIF fact-finding mission to West Papua to investigate the human rights situation in the territory. Fact-finding missions by the international community to West Papua can only help improve the human rights situation in the territory. To quote Pope Paul VI, "If you want peace, work for justice".