Human Rights Update West Papua – April 2019
covering January – March 2019

Summary

The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to either armed conflict or natural disasters continued to increase during the first quarter of 2019. The ongoing armed conflict in the Nduga regency has reportedly led to the displacement of more than 36,000 people between December 2018 and March 2019. President Joko Widodo has ordered strong military measures against the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPN PB) in order to continue with the implementation of large-scale infrastructure projects in the provinces of Papua and Papua Barat, making a withdrawal of security forces from the Nduga Regency highly unlikely. In addition, a flash flood and landslides in the Jayapura area on 16 March 2019 caused the displacement of further estimated 5,000 people.

We are concerned about the significantly large number extra-judicial killings in the fourth quarter of 2018, according to updated data. Ten out of eleven cases occurred in the Nduga Regency mostly throughout December 2018, but have been documented and published later during the first quarter of 2019. These figures do not include people who have been reported missing since the beginning of the security force operations or are believed to have become victims of enforced disappearance.

The updated statistics on human rights violations do not indicate an improvement of the human rights situation in West Papua. Political arrests correlate with commemorations and spontaneous increase of political civil society activity. The prosecution of three KNPB members with treason charges and the ongoing trial against a Polish citizen and a Papuan student – all five charged with the articles 106 and 110 of the Indonesian Penal Code KUHP on treason – illustrate the persistent strategy by law enforcement institutions to criminalize peaceful political activity challenging Indonesia’s unitary state ideology. Human rights defenders continue to be intimidated through the police and military and face discreditation through social media and dubious internet websites.

Read what UN mechanisms observe and recommend regarding human rights in West Papua.

The information in this report is collected by local human rights defenders. As human rights defenders face hostile working conditions and legal aid services are lacking in remote areas, this compilation of cases cannot be regarded as complete.
Three KNPB activists charged with treason — Human rights lawyers file pre-trial

The West Papua National Committee (KNPB) together with a coalition of Papuan human lawyers have filed a pre-trial motion to the District court in Timika in response to the unlawful arrest and prosecution of three KNPB activists. On 31 December 2018, joint security forces raided the KNPB office in Timika and arrested the six KNPB activists who had organised a worship ceremony. Three of them, namely Mr. Yanto Awerkion, Mr. Sem Asso, and Mr. Edo Dogopia were charged with treason (articles 106 and 110 of the Penal Code KUHP) and remained in detention awaiting trial. Human rights lawyers argue that the arrests were not conducted in accordance with the ‘Indonesian Criminal Procedure Code’ (KUHAP), because the police officers failed to present either arrest warrants or search warrants as they raided the KNPB office. Prior to the event, the KNPB in Timika delivered a letter of notification to the police regarding their plan to hold the prayer session, as it is legally required.

The pre-trial started on 11 February 2019 and was heavily secured by a disproportionate large number of fully armed police officers and armoured vehicles. The lawyers of KNPB understood this as an act of intimidation against themselves, the judges and KNPB supporters who want to attend the pre-trial hearings. On 13 February 2019, the police officers allegedly ill-treated two KNPB activists who wanted to attend the pre-trial. Police officers forced Mr. Soon Tabuni to take off his shirt and open his trouser. The officers subsequently cut off two bracelets and a necklace before they allowed him to enter the court room. Another KNPB supporter named Mr. Pit Gobay was allegedly beaten by police officers as he wanted to attend the pre-trial hearing on February 14, 2019. On 19 February 2019, the panel of judges rejected the KNPB’s pre-trial complaint, arguing that the law enforcement operation was in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP). The trial against the three KNPB activists was launched on 28 March 2019.

Read more case details here and here

Police officers torture Papuan suspect with snake — video goes viral

A video showing two police officers torturing a Papuan man with a snake during detention has gone viral after being published on YouTube. Indonesian human rights lawyer Veronica Koman shared the video on her Twitter account, explaining that Sam Lokon, a member of the West Papua National Committee (KNPB) faced a similar torture technique after being arrested last month. The video shows a handcuffed Papuan man sitting on the floor in front of a wall while two police officers try to force him to confess. The officers threaten to put the snake in the suspect’s mouth and trousers if he does not confess the alleged theft of a mobile phone. The torture occurred in the city of Wamena, Jayawijaya Regency, Papua Province. The spokesman of the Papuan Regional Police, Ahmad Mustofa Kamal, downplayed the officers’ actions, arguing that the snake was not venomous and that the officers had not beaten the suspect. As public attention on the case increased, the internal police investigation body PROPAM investigated the case and initiated a code of conduct trial. Both officers under investigation were allegedly relocated to a different police unit. However, the case was not filed to a public court, allowing the perpetrators to get away with minor disciplinary sanctions. Several special procedures mandate holders of the UN human rights council published a joint statement in which they condemned racism and police violence against indigenous Papuans.

Read more case details
Treason trial against Polish citizen and Papuan Defendant launched in Wamena

The trial against Polish citizen Jakub Fabian Skrzypski and the Papuan defendant Simon Magal, started on 14 January 2019 at the District Court in Wamena, Jayawijaya Regency of Papua Province. Both men have been charged with the articles 106 and 110 of the Indonesian Criminal Code KUHP on treason, article 53 KUHP regarding the attempt to commit a criminal offense and article 55 KUHP on committing, ordering or participating in a criminal offense. The trial was postponed twice because Mr. Skrzypski refused to attend the court hearing. His lawyers stated that he had gone into a hunger strike, criticizing the bad conditions during detention at the Jayawijaya District police station. A statement read aloud by the lawyers during a court session on 7 February 2019 described that Jakub Skrzypski was tortured during detention. A mobile brigade police officer allegedly punched him through the cell-door bars, spat at him and allegedly threatened to kill Jakub Skrzypski. According to Skrzypski, the incident occurred on 30 January 2019. Jayawijaya district police chief, Mr. Tonny Ananda, denied the allegations.

Read more details

Police officers kill suspected drug dealer in Sorong

Members of the Sorong District Police Anti-Drug Unit have shot dead Indra Wijaya Taran on 21 January 2019, at 10.00 pm, in Pramuka Road, Sorong City. The police justified the use of fire arms as an act of self defense, arguing that Indra Wijayah Taran was dealing drugs and attacked several police officers who tried to arrest him. Indra Wijaya Taran died due to blood loss shortly after his admission to the Mutiara Hospital. The Sorong district police chief, Dewa Made Sidan Sutrahna, stated in an interview that his men had released two warning shots before they took aimed shots at Indra Taran. This statement is contrary to the bullet wounds sustained by Indra Taran during the police operation. The bullet pierced Indra’s chest from back to front, which would indicate that Indra was attempting to escape the arrest instead of attacking the officers with a knife. The collected evidence of 2 grams of methamphetamine, a lighter and a smoking pipe support the fact that Indra Wijaya Taran was a drug user rather than a drug dealer. Indra’s family members and their lawyer requested an internal police investigation against the law enforcement officers.

Read more case details

WCC delegation visits West Papua – key issues were religious freedom and human rights

An ecumenical delegation coordinated by the World Council of Churches (WCC) visited Indonesia on 15-22 February. The visit included the provinces of Papua and Papua Barat. The purpose of the ecumenical delegation’s visit was to express solidarity and encourage member churches and related organisations in their efforts for justice and peace in Indonesia. Organised as part of the WCC’s ‘Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace’, the visit focused on issues concerning religious freedom and inter-religious harmony in Indonesia, and the human rights situation in Papua. The delegation was hosted by the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) and the Evangelical Christian Church in Tanah Papua (GKI-TP). During the visit, the delegation met with Papuan government representatives,
church leaders, human rights activists, traditional leaders and victims of human rights violations and conflict. The delegation received a joint appeal from the leaders of four churches in Papua — the GKI-TP, the KINGMI Church in Tanah Papua, the Evangelical Church in Tanah Papua (GIDI), and the Fellowship of Baptist Churches of Papua — calling for international ecumenical support for a comprehensive political dialogue for the resolution of the situation in Papua.

Dubious website alleges human rights defenders of disseminating false information

The head of the Foundation for Justice and Integrity of the Papuan People (YKKMP), Theo Hesegem, has been subjected to intimidation by security force members. This occurred after the dubious website “Kitorangpapuanews.com” discredited the human rights defenders Theo Hesegem and Pastor John Jongga, accusing both of them of disseminating false information on the killing of civilians during the ongoing security force operation in the regency of Nduga. The article refers to Theo Hesegem and Pastor John Jongga as “members of the separatist movement OPM, wearing a neck tie”. This stigma is often used by members of the military and right-wing nationalist groups in Indonesia. After the article was published, members of the 1702 Jayawijaya military command filed a complaint to the local police, claiming that Theo Hesegem had disseminated false information. A member of the criminal investigation police department questioned Theo Hesegem at the police station in relation to his report on human rights violations during the security force operation in the Nduga Regency. Theo Hesegem confirmed that he had written the report, but rejected to answer further questions because the police officer had not summoned Theo Hesegem, as it is required under the Indonesian Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP).

Nine KNPB activists unlawfully arrested in Merauke — one activist subjected to physical ill-treatment

Three members of the Indonesian Special Forces (KOPASSUS) intercepted nine activists of the West Papua National Committee (KNPB) and a five-year-old girl on 24 February 2019 around at 4.30 pm in Kelapa Lima, an area in the Papuan town of Merauke. The soldiers started arguing with the KNPB members because their shirts showed emblems of the morning start flag — a symbol of Papuan cultural identity which is also used by the separatist movement. Subsequently, the special force members called several police officers, who arrested the nine KNPB members — including five-year-old Martina Yawon — and brought them to the Merauke District Police station. At the police station, the officers seized all shirts with the morning star emblem. Mr. Yukianus Tanden was allegedly subjected to physical ill-treatment in a backroom at the police station. A special force member allegedly held Tanden by the throat and slapped him on the cheek. The KOPASSUS officers threatened to track down the activists if the arrest and ill-treatments would be exposed on social media. All KNPB members were released at 8.30 pm. Martina Yawon was allowed to leave the police station earlier.

Read more case details
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At least 2000 displaced persons from Nduga Regency fled to Jayawijaya Regency — at least 13 IDPs reported dead

The ongoing security force operations in multiple districts of the Nduga regency have caused the displacement of thousands of indigenous people. Human rights defenders report that the internally displaced persons (IDPs) originate from thirteen districts in the Nduga Regency that are affected by the military operation. During a press conference at the Amnesty International office in Jakarta on 29 March 2019, human rights defenders explained that the number of IDPs was estimated to be higher than 36,000 including people originating from the districts Mapenduma, Mugi, Jigi, Yal, Mbulmu Yalma, Kagayem, Nirkuri, Inikgal, Mbuwa and Dal. BBC Indonesia reported in early March 2019, that approximately 2000 IDPs from Nduga are estimated to have sought refuge in the regency of Jayawijaya alone. The IDPs live with families from the Nduga Regency who have built temporary accommodations. A group of teachers, volunteers and civil society organisations have formed a solidarity group to support IDPs in Wamena, Jayawijaya Regency. On 8 February 2019, the group established a temporary school for 613 internally displaced children from the Nduga Regency. Members of the solidarity group have been subjected to intimidation by security force personnel. Between 10 and 14 February 2019, members of the police and military repeatedly tried to access the temporary school premises. On 15 February 2019, the chief of the Jayawijaya 1702 Military Command called the members of the solidarity initiative and scolded them for having established the temporary school. He argued that the Nduga Regency is safe and that such a school would only draw public attention on the situation in the Nduga Regency. He suggested that the children should be brought to the Kenyam District of Nduga regency or attend existing schools in the Jayawijaya District.

IDPs from Nduga regency have stated that many displaced villagers continue to hide in the jungle, where they live in small groups in improvised huts and leave their shelter only during the night to look for food. The harsh climate and food scarcity in the central Papuan highlands have particularly affected women and children. According to local human rights defenders, at least thirteen IDPs died due to exhaustion, starvation and hypothermia after fleeing their villages. Among them were women and at least seven children under the age of nine. A mother and her two new-borns reportedly died, as the woman gave birth in the jungle.

Devastating flash flood and landslides hit Jayapura

Heavy rains have caused a devastating flash flood and landslides on 16 March 2019, affecting mainly the city of Sentani in the regency of Jayapura, Papua Province. The flash flood reportedly hit the city around 9.30 pm (East Indonesia Time). A few hours later around 0.15 am, a large landslide also came down in Jayapura City. The heavy rainfalls led to the rise of the water level in the Sentani Lake, causing the displacement of many people, whose houses are located on the lakeside. A government report estimates that at least 105 persons died and 915 persons were injured during the natural disasters, 82 persons are reported missing, and more than 5,000 persons were displaced. Apart from the destruction of houses, the flood also severely damaged the infrastructure in the Jayapura Regency, such as bridges, schools and places of worship. UN chief António Guterres expressed solidarity with Indonesian authorities in response to the...
devastating flash floods. Guterres stated that the United Nations are “…ready to work with them as they respond to the humanitarian needs resulting from both natural disasters.”

Read more details

Update on armed conflict in Nduga Regency – Number of civilian casualties on the rise as armed clashes continue

The Foundation for Justice and the Integrity of Papuan Peoples (YKKMP) has published a new report with updated information on the current situation in the regency of Nduga. Since the beginning of a widespread security force operation on 4 December 2018, journalists, human rights defenders and observers are restricted from going to the Nduga Regency. Local human rights organisations have documented the cases of at least eleven indigenous Papuans, who were killed by security force members since the beginning of the military operations.

Security force members reportedly acted violent against indigenous villagers as the torture of Yuwes Gwijangge in the Nirkuri district illustrates. Members of the military hit him with a rifle butt to the forehead, causing a bleeding injury and beat him to the neck. Subsequently, soldiers allegedly tied him with a rope and pulled him over the airstrip. Human rights defenders reported that the villages they visited were empty because most people fled to neighbouring regencies or the surrounding forests in fear of repressive acts by military forces. A team from the health agency of Papua Province visited the districts of Mbuwa and Dal to provide health services to internally displaced persons (IDPs). However, human rights defenders stated that the members of the military monitored the health services. The presence of military in health facilities prevented sick and injured indigenous people from accessing urgently needed health services because many IDPs are traumatized and afraid of security forces.

On 7 March 2019, TPN-PB forces opened fire at a group of military members in Windi Village, Derakma District, after the military members had allegedly set five civilian houses on fire. At least three Indonesian soldiers were killed during the fight. The Indonesian military reacted through deployment of additional military units to West Papua. On 9 March 2019, approximately 600 personnel arrived at the Timika Port – the soldiers were deployed to the Nduga Regency, as part of the Government's strategy to take prompt and hard action against the TPN-PB. A second exchange of fire on 20 March 2019 in the District of Mugi caused the death of a mobile brigade police officer – two other officers were injured by bullets.

Read more on the situation in Nduga Regency

Allegations on violence against visitors and negligence at the Siriwini general Hospital in Nabire

The ICP received credible information on various cases of human rights violations at the Siriwini General Hospital in the city of Nabire, Papua Province. The Papuan Tabernacle Church has raised concerns over new policies at the mentioned hospital, which have resulted in three cases of civil rights violations throughout February and March 2019. Members of the Denzipur 112 Infantry Unit repeatedly tortured people who had come to Siriwini Hospital to visit relatives without purchasing the visitor card. In addition, human rights defenders raised a case indicating the neglect of minimum health quality standards causing the death of a four-year-old child in June 2018. The director of Siriwini General Hospital, Dr. Johni Ribo Tandasau, has introduced visitor cards for relatives and friends who come to the hospital to visit the patients. Visitors have to purchase the cards for IDR 50,000, approximately € 3,30. The director has justified the policy by claiming that
too many visitors and repeated confrontation under the influence of alcohol disturb the recovery of patients and have allegedly resulted in an increased mortality rate at the Siriwini hospital. Since January 2019, the hospital is heavily guarded by members of the police and military, which have been deployed to enforce the new visitor policy and maintain public order at the hospital. Military personnel reportedly carry out other tasks of hospital employees, such as transferring the bodies of deceased patients to relatives. Many indigenous Papuans do not dare to come to the Siriwini Hospital for treatment because they are afraid and traumatized.

Human rights defenders claim that the quality of healthcare services at the Siriwini Hospital is very low. The hospital is chronically understaffed, hence sudden drops of the physical condition of patients remain unrecognized and often unaddressed. Thus, relatives permanently need to look after the patient. As a result of these developments, many indigenous Papuans have returned to traditional forms of treatment – even for serious diseases – because the Siriwini Hospital has a particularly bad reputation for the low quality of its health services. The death of four-year-old Selinda Tenouye on 13 June 2018 is emblematic for the negligence of minimum health standards at the Siriwini Hospital. In this case, the prescription of inadequate intravenous medication caused the death of the patient only 15 minutes after the infusion was administered.

Police officers arbitrarily arrest indigenous market Women in Wamena - one person sustains bullet injury

Human rights defenders reported a case of ill-treatment in Wamena, the main city of the Jayawijaya Regency, Papua Province on 26 March 2019 at 1.00 pm. Four plain cloth officers of the Jayawijaya District Police arbitrarily arrested three indigenous women named Kalina Tabuni, Mia Dabi and Mama Rumbewas, who were selling betel nuts and vegetables in front of the store in Trikora Road. The officers allegedly went to the store to prevent illegal gambling activities. Twenty-three-year-old Vinsen Kosay sustained a bullet injury to the right foot as he was standing next to the store. The bullet pierced the outside of his foot and exited at the sole of the foot. Subsequently, the police officers brought Kalina Tabuni, Mia Dabi, Mama Rumbewas and also Visen Kosay in a black pick-up truck to the Irian Street. All suspects were questioned on the loading area of the pick-up truck. The police officers allegedly seized the suspects’ personal belongings, including their mobile phones and money. According to Vinsen, the officers took two million rupiahs (approximately € 130) from him. The mobile phones were later returned to their owners through a third person. The officers told the three women to stop selling their goods in front of the store and threatened them not to report incident.
About the ICP: The International Coalition for Papua (ICP) of faith-based and civil society organisations works to address the serious human rights situation in West Papua and supports a peaceful solution to the conflict there. The Coalition together with its partners supports advocacy work and networking at the international level for Papua as a land of peace and documents human rights violations in the region in cooperation with local sources. The ICP recognises all human rights and their fulfilment through active participation of civil society. Therefore, the Coalition sees the need to support partners striving for the recognition of basic human rights and seeking peaceful solutions to the implementation of the right to self-determination. The Coalition supports all human rights including the freedom to express political opinions peacefully, the right to self-determination and the critical role of human rights defenders in a peaceful transformation of the ongoing conflict.

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