



Intimidation and Harassment of West Papuan Students and Civil Society Groups

As part of a recently published compilation of human rights reports on West Papua, Papuans Behind Bars reported an overall decrease in the number of West Papuan political prisoners.¹ This trend, however, has not translated into a reduction in the incidence of abuse, harassment, and intimidation of West Papuan activists and their supporters across Indonesia.

This update, produced by Papuans Behind Bars (PBB), focuses on exposing police and military intimidation of West Papuan students and civil society groups outside of West Papua between September and December 2017. The reports were compiled by the Papuan Students Alliance (AMP)² in Java, and the West Papua National Committee (KNPB) Consulate³ in Manado, and verified by Papuans Behind Bars researchers. Taken together, the cases presented in this brief report demonstrate a disturbing trend of civil and political rights violations, limiting freedom of expression and assembly. The frequency of arbitrary arrests further underscores the denial of the right to liberty for people working for social and political justice in West Papua.

The purpose of this update is to show that systematic violations of West Papuans' rights happen not only inside West Papua, but also throughout Indonesia. In recent years, West Papuan student dormitories have been targeted by the police, military, and local militias. The case of Obby Koyoga, arising out of a three-day police siege of a West Papuan dormitory in Yogyakarta (14 -16 July 2016), is an infamous example, and one condemned by hundreds of Indonesian civil society groups as racist and discriminatory.⁴ PBB believes that

¹ Human Rights in West Papua 2017, <http://www.humanrightspapua.org/images/docs/HumanRightsPapua2017-ICP.pdf>

² AMP is a peaceful organization established on 27 July 1998 by West Papuan students based in Java and Bali. The main goal of this organisation is to achieve West Papua's right to self-determination. It regularly holds protests across Java and Bali on significant historical dates for West Papua. Consequently, they have been victims of intimidation and mass arrests.

³ KNPB Indonesia Consulate is a branch of the KNPB organisation based in Manado, Sulawesi. It was established on 26 March 2016. They hold peaceful protests and other non violent actions on significant historical dates for West Papua advocating for the right to self-determination. They have been victims of intimidation and mass arrests.

⁴ "Court Ruling Criticised as Racist by Rights Activists" <http://www.papuansbehindbars.org/?p=3666>

there are many other similar incidents that are not reported, as patterns of abuse and intimidation are often normalised by many West Papuans.

PBB will continue to report this type of intimidation in the future, with a view to better understanding, documenting, and exposing the many forms of discrimination against West Papuans and their supporters, and the suppression of their civil and political rights.

Monitoring students

Manado, North Sulawesi

At approximately 7.30 am on Sunday, 17 September 2017, three plainclothes police officers visited *Kamasan V* West Papuan student dormitory⁵ in Manado, the capital city of North Sulawesi. They were reportedly looking for both the head of KNPB Consulate, and head of the dormitory, each of whom were away from the premises at the time. Not finding the persons they were looking for, the police then asked all of the dormitory residents to gather for a group photo. None of the students consented, despite police reportedly stating that they received an order from the police chief to build a "special relationship" with West Papuans. No warrant was provided.

Two days after the visit at *Kamasan V*, at approximately 10:30 am on 19 September 2017, five armed police officers burst into the kitchen of *Cenderawasih V*, another West Papuan student dormitory in Manado. While surveying the residence, they took photos of the Morning Star symbol depicted in the entryway and the courtyard. They left when students protested. Later that day, at around 2.15 pm, a larger force of police returned, with seven cars and six motorcycles, as well as some high level officers. Twenty-five students were arrested and brought to the local police station for interrogation before being released later that day.



Front entryway (above) and courtyard (below) of Cenderawasih V depicting Morning Star before police visited on 19 September 2017



Hiskia Meage, Head of KNPB Consulate, surrounded by police, 9 November 2017

⁵ Ethnic-based student dormitories are a common feature on or near post-secondary campuses across Indonesia. They provide affordable housing options for students studying away from home. Some are sponsored by regional governments, while others are privately managed.

At 7:30 am on Thursday, 9 November 2017, approximately two dozen security personnel returned to the Cenderawasih V dormitory, demanding that the painted Morning Star symbol on the premises be erased.⁶ The students refused, and a fight nearly broke out between police and students. Police had erased the symbol by midday. Shortly thereafter, eleven police officers came to relieve the initial group, and remained there until 7 pm.

One week later, police returned to Cenderawasih V on 16 November to talk about radicalism.-Police also insisted that the Morning Star symbols, repainted since the previous incident, must be erased.

Tomohon, North Sulawesi

On Wednesday, 4 October 2017, at around 3 pm, eight police officers wearing body armour and helmets visited *Kamasan VIII West* Papuan student dormitory in Tomohon, a small town around 50 km from the provincial capital of Manado. Police wanted to take pictures of every single student residing in the dorm. None of the students consented, and reported feeling terrorised after the police departed.

Bandung, West Java

Government-sponsored Central Mamberamo student dormitory in Bandung was visited twice by police and plainclothes security forces during the period from September to December 2017. This follows several other police visits in the recent past, none of which had been publicly reported.

On 24 October 2017 at approximately 10 am, four uniformed police officers and three plainclothes agents entered the building unannounced and without warrant. The security forces searched each bedroom, and asked for personal information of every student residing there, inquiring particularly into their daily activities and potential affiliations with student groups. A subsequent incident occurred on 1 November 2017 when eight police officers, one military officer, and two plainclothes agents entered the dormitory without permission at approximately 12 pm. The security forces interrogated each student, searched their bedrooms, and forcibly checked their mobile phones. The students reported that they felt terrorised by this incident.



A plainclothes policeman removes the Morning Star, 9 November 2017 (above); Police visit Cenderawasih V , 16 November 2017 (below)



⁶ <http://celebesnews.id/2017/11/09/antisipatif-kodam-xiii-merdeka-dan-polisi-hapus-gambar-bendera-opm-di-manado/>

Malang, East Java

Ikatan Mahasiswa Papua (IMAPA) or the Papuan Students League, held a 3-day seminar (3 - 5 November 2017) to welcome new West Papuan students to Malang. Malang is the second largest city in the province of East Java, and is located approximately 95 km from Surabaya, the capital of East Java. The purpose of the seminar was to provide new students with orientation information including topics such as adapting to living away from home, and opportunities for various extracurricular activities. At around 7 pm, security forces arrived uninvited at Villa Holanda, a private house on the mountain-side of Malang where the seminar was being hosted.

On the second day, local police pressured the owner of the venue to submit a permit request to them, despite there being no legal requirement to ask for police permission to hold a gathering at a private residence. Upon threats that the event would be forcibly dispersed, two students submitted a permit request and were heavily interrogated at the time of submission.

On 5 November, seven police officers including the head of the Malang police force, arrived during the closing of the West Papuan students' seminar. In addition to creating an intimidating atmosphere, the police asked for the full list of seminar participants and the names of West Papuan students attending.

Jember, East Java

At approximately 3 pm on Friday, 17 November 2017, more than a dozen security forces personnel burst into a house rented by West Papuan students in Jember, East Java.⁷ Three students who were sleeping in their rooms were woken and beaten, and their rooms ransacked. One Papuan student who attempted to document the abuses was subsequently questioned and prevented from taking any documentation. The following day, the victims were taken to Jember police station. Police clarified to the students that they were not involved in the incident, they claimed that it was carried out by the members of the military.



Ransacked student rooms (left, centre); Edmun Bawor's knee was swollen following abuse by security personnel (right)

⁷ Jember is located east of Malang in the province of East Java, approximately midway between Surabaya and Denpasar, Bali.

Jakarta

On 28 November 2017, a number of West Papuan students received threatening text messages warning them not to participate in the upcoming 1 December demonstration. The message (at right) reads: "Brothers and sisters, all of you be careful about joining the demo on 1 December. Bob* and Phil* will not be arrested, because they often share information with intelligence agents. The police will shoot all of you... because they were shot at by TPN [the Papuan Liberation Army] in Tembagapura."

* The names have been changed to protect identity



On 15 December 2017, two plainclothes police officers came to Jayawijaya West Papuan student dormitory in East Jakarta asking for the head of AMP Jakarta's whereabouts (*photo at right*).



PAPUANS BEHIND BARS



Papuans Behind Bars aims to provide accurate and transparent data, published in English and Indonesian, to facilitate direct support for prisoners and promote wider debate and campaigning in support of free expression in West Papua.

Papuans Behind Bars is a collective effort initiated by Papuan civil society groups working together as the Civil Society Coalition to Uphold Law and Human Rights in Papua. It is a grassroots initiative and represents a broad collaboration between lawyers, human rights groups, adat groups, activists, journalists and individuals in West Papua, as well as Jakarta-based NGOs and international solidarity groups.

Questions, comments and corrections are welcomed, and you can write to us at info@papuansbehindbars.org.