

International Solidarity for Papua

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Paper for *Paths to Justice and Prosperity: West Papua Conference*
International House
August 9-10, 2007

Military repression with impunity, determined indigenous resistance and sustained international solidarity were the ingredients from which East Timor's liberation "miraculously" emerged. The miracle may not work in Papua but all the Timor ingredients are present. The key components and sustainers of international solidarity are the activist exiles in Australia, PNG, the US, UK, Holland and Sweden; sympathetic politicians especially in the US, UK, Australia, Vanuatu and New Zealand; solidarity and support groups-- national, local and also regional in the South Pacific, North America and Western Europe (for instance, the Pacific Concerns Resource Center); the major human rights group actors (Human Rights Watch, Tapol, the RF Kennedy Center); the UN Human Rights Committee and the Secretary General's Special Representatives. The degree and depth of international support and "pre-mobilisation" for Papua is often belittled but in my view is adequate for the kind of showdown with the TNI experienced globally in September 1999.

As in East Timor Australia is probably key to successful international intervention in Papua: there is little prospect of even a Labor government showing real solidarity with the Papuans except under duress from local and international civil society. There is also the problem that in Papua unlike Timor the risk of "demographic inundation" for the Papuans by settlers from the rest of Indonesia may have persuaded fence sitters and fair weather proponents of the Responsibility to Protect principle that Papua is a lost cause

There have been serious defections of late from the ranks of real solidarity with the Papuans—Congressman Eni Faleomavaega not least, and the Australian government's dereliction of any duty to protect Papua in the Lombok Treaty for defence cooperation with Indonesia last year has drawn a disappointing media and community reaction here. Moreover the steady loss of talented Papuans to exile through intimidation (John Rumbiak, most damagingly), together with the closing of the province has made the production of regular high quality human rights and other local reporting in English a difficulty for international campaigns.

But Papua has not dropped off the radar and remains a focus and a key test for all that the Australian government says it stands for or should stand for in Indonesia—effective military and governance reform and real attention to Papua's gross educational, employment and health care disadvantages and the continued theft of its resources and squandering of the wealth they generate.

A real moment of truth may never come in Papua but the present situation seems to make it more likely than not.

I see three major scenarios ahead:

- 1) **More of the Same:** Continued military buildup and formation of militias, together with repression and police/military impunity as before; more resource projects and new settlers leading to Papuan minoritisation and gradual defeat for the cause of self determination;
- 2) **Enlightenment in Jakarta** following sustained international pressure— leading to a peace and genuine autonomy deal on the lines of the Aceh settlement of 2005 with major international input;
- 3) **Sudden Catastrophe** arising from Papuan reactions to the unfolding of Scenario 1) and a military/police crackdown generating an international backlash followed by effective international intervention.