

Forum: Disarmament

Issue: Addressing: Addressing the human rights violations in the territory of West Papua as a result of arm proliferation in political group

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Introduction

Significant human rights violations and political strife characterize the conflict in West Papua. West Papua is a region rich in culture and natural resources; however, it has long been plagued by human rights abuses. Notably, the proliferation of weapons, primarily linked to the deep historical context with the government, not only intensified violent conflict but also a threat to the lives of millions. Since 1960, when West Papua was annexed to Indonesia, a continuous debate over the right to self-determination occurred, with the contradiction among two political groups, the separatists and the government. In this context, the circulation of weapons plays the most essential role in escalating conflicts.

The contents of recent reports urged the importance of taking action on this situation, documented by international human rights organizations, with civilians frequently getting caught in the conflict between Indonesian security forces and separatists in West Papua, in which there are many extrajudicial executions, forced relocations, and acts of torture. The state's repression of opinions further complicates the matter, with the limited freedom of speech suppressed by the government and severely harming advocates for justice.

The situation must be approached from multiple angles to combat these issues. The plan must result in the de-escalation of the conflict via disarmament programs. However, this will necessitate strong backing for human rights advocates, international supervision, and strong public awareness regarding the aforementioned issue. Furthermore, the importance of communication between the Indonesian government and West Papua's leaders is needed. Seeing the urgent attention paid to the plight of the West Papuans worldwide, it is essential to call for the West Papuan's rights and ensure their voices are heard in fighting for justice and autonomy (Human Rights Watch).

Definition of Key Terms

Arms Proliferation

Arms proliferation: The widespread dissemination or rapid increase in the production of arms, commonly found in small arms and light weapons. The phenomenon is used by a variety of actors, including State and non-State groups, and has significant implications for conflict, security and human rights.

Self-Determination

The right to allow a people to determine their own political status and pursue its economic, social and cultural development. A fundamental concept in international law and human rights, asserting the right of groups to govern themselves and to make decisions about their governance and future (Legal Information Institute).

Background

Historical context

The situation in West Papua stems from its complex historical background, including its colonial legacy and the New York Agreement. Originally home to indigenous tribes, West Papua was colonized by the Dutch in the 17th century.

In 1962, under pressure from the United States to prevent Indonesia from aligning with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, a negotiation resulted in the New York Agreement. The agreement placed West Papua temporarily under United Nations administration before control was transferred to Indonesia in 1963. When Indonesia gained independence after World War II, Papua was annexed to Indonesia in 1969 under a controversial Act of Free Choice, also referred to as the "Act of No Choice" by the Papuans, an act that many West Papuans considered illegitimate because of its coercive nature (Human Rights Watch). With just over a thousand chosen representatives, this integration sparked popular discontent. Galvanizing the Papuans will be independent, forming several political groups, including the Papuan Freedom Movement(OPM).

For decades, the Indonesian Government has used military repression against these anti-government political groups, posing violations of the population's human rights. Reports of extrajudicial executions, torture, and enforced disappearances are not rare. The profile deterred the local population from fearing the Government and denied them the right to free expression. In addition, external factors have exacerbated and compounded the conflict, including conflicts between transnational corporations over the region's abundant natural resources.

Political Dynamics

When it comes to the political aspect, it is impossible to ignore the international relations in West Papua. Despite ongoing illegal activities and human rights violations, the situation in West Papua has not yet received widespread attention. One reason for this is Indonesia's status in Southeast Asia. Indonesia is not only active in the trade zone of Southeast Asia, but also plays a crucial role in the security and stability of many countries. Therefore, for strategic reasons, many countries are reluctant to respond to this issue.

During the Cold War, the United States and other Western powers worried about the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. This led Indonesia to support its sovereignty claims in West Papua and to resist Soviet influence in the region. This has led to limited social autonomy for Papuans, as some major powers value the stability of the region more than the rights of Papuans. Indonesia's indispensable role in the world has led many countries to downplay and avoid commenting on human rights abuses in West Papua in order to maintain good relations.

Organizations including the West Papua Liberation Movement (ULMWP) have been campaigning for international recognition and support for the Papuan people's right to self-determination. They have submitted petitions to various international bodies calling for a genuine independence referendum. Despite the efforts of groups such as the ULMWP, these efforts are often overshadowed by broader geopolitical considerations. The international community continues to face the challenge of balancing diplomatic relations with Indonesia in order to comprehensively address the pressing conflict facing the Papuan people.

Social factors

West Papua is an incredibly diverse state, home to over 250 distinct tribes among the indigenous Papuan population. While a source of pride for many, this also poses challenges in the modern world. Initially, many tribes are deeply threatened by external influences and government policies aimed at assimilation. A prominent example, the Asmat tribe, known for their wood sculpture, exemplifies the cultural richness closely associated with their natural environment and traditional beliefs as modernization encroaches, tribes known for their wood sculptures at a crossroads., known for their wood importance of human rights advocacy for the Indigenous peoples in West Papua.

Systemic racism and cultural erosion are also collectively the source of many Papuans' deep desire for independence. Papuans believe they are treated as second-class citizens in their homeland, which has led to growing support for pro-independence movements such as the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP). Many Papuans have expressed a strong desire for self-determination to regain the identity and rights they were meant to have. Prominent figures in these movements have also expressed that independence is necessary for political autonomy and preserving their unique culture and way of life (Human Rights Watch).

Major Parties Involved

Indonesia

Indonesia is involved since its government has heavily militarized the West Papua region. With military and political forces. Indonesia took the stance of maintaining a powerful national security system, and the Indonesian government claimed to strike separatist movements in West Papua and found it necessary to preserve territorial integrity. One of the reasons why the Indonesian government is concerned this issue is that abuses in human rights might cause problems in stability and unity, especially when the impact of combining proliferation and political groups can be multifaceted.

United States

The U.S. government has taken a stance of concerning the human rights violations in West Papua, in the same time, the U.S. government has also focused on strategic ties in the security system and economic cooperation with Indonesia. Though the United States didn't officially support West Papua for its independence. It did promote communication through diplomatic channels, taking views on human rights and governance problems. The United States has a high reputation for promoting global human rights. Nevertheless, further steps in human rights advocacy might affect their cooperation with Indonesia.

Australia

With historical background, Australia has always supported Indonesia's territorial integrity. Nevertheless, their stance has always been relatively cautious since they have also been considering and expressed concerns over human rights in West Papua. Australia has provided support in both diplomatic and military aspects to Indonesia, but has started to avoid from significant interventions. There are strong historical ties between the two countries, if Australia has strong intentions, it might be viewed as interfering, receiving backlash from the Indonesian government. Nevertheless, if their approach weren't strong enough, citizens supporting human rights in West Papua would criticize the government.

Papua National Liberation Army (TPN-PB)

This political group promotes for independence from Indonesia. Advocate for self-determination and human rights within the West Papua region. After facing racial discrimination and brutal repression, their determination for independence became more determined, following the step of East Timor's success in independence. Some of the people involved in this organization have already unilateral declared the independence of their country, although it wasn't recognized by the world.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1961-1969:	Indonesia begins its military occupation of West Papua, it was previously under the control of Dutch. As tensions rise, various of groups has formed, acquiring weapons from illegal channels and start to promote indenpendecee.
1975:	The organization of the Free Papua Movement (OPM) is established, the OPM later on takes a prominent role in the armed struggle against Indonesian role.
1984-1988:	This period is marked by the highest number of reported human rights abuses.
1990:	The issue start to receive international attention and efforst were made for peace. Human rights organization around the world starts to raise awareness for the issue ongoing abuses in West Papua.
2001:	The Indoesian government granted a special autonomy policy to the West Papua region.
2002:	The establish of East Timor, their fight for independence has succeeded. For many OPM and other similar organization members, it's the steps they wish to follow.
2010:	The human rights violations in West Papua start to receive caring from international community, including the United Nation and European Union.
2020s-Now:	The problem happening within West Papua are complicated, though platform like social medias has start to gain a lot of critisims, international relationship between countries are still very complex. Most countries remains netural rather than taking a stance on this problem.

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Regional Autonomy Law (Published in 2001)

In 2001, the Indonesian government formulated the Special Autonomy Law for Papua. Offering greater political and economic independent authority to Papua. This movement aims to alleviate the criticisms of the government, and also improve the socioeconomic conditions in this region. Although the law already allows the establishment of government and following a system for self-determination. Many of the Papuan are still not satisfied, asserting that this implementation has failed to address systemic problems such as discrimination and human rights violations. As for now, many of the activists are still rebutting that this Regional Autonomy Law is superficial, it's only viewing on the surface rather than trying to resolve the underlying issues.

International Advocacy and Pressure (Starting from 2010 –)

Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs), start to notice the human rights abuses in West Papua. Such as the Human Rights Watch, has started to conduct research and publish reports that help to raise awareness. These reports have gained international attention and aim to pressure on the Indonesian government to make changes to improve the human rights record. Nevertheless, the authenticity of these reports were on doubt, and it

seem to have limited success and impact in promoting effective changes. Though the exact date for each report may vary, but this investigation project started in the 2010s, with ongoing reports recently published in 2024.

Papuan Peace Dialogue (2016)

Several Peace Dialogues were held in this decade, initiated in 2016, when the Indonesian government and various Papuan leaders came together aiming to foster a solution for reconciliation, and also resolve dissatisfied events due to historical injustices. The original intention was set for both sides to discuss their grievances. Nevertheless, the dialogue failed to create any tangible outcomes. While the governments focused on unity, the Papuan leaders recognized that there was a lack of motivation to push the government to be actually engaged to in making changes. Or else, the underlying issues will still exist even if the government implements arrangement that seems to help the situation.

Possible Solutions

- **Develop a comprehensive Disarmament program:**

This new structure of the Disarmament program should consider the collection and destruction as well as setting a new regulation system to prevent the usage of light weapons among the citizens (Especially smuggled weapons that aren't regulated by the government). Moreover, limiting the weapons used by various of political forces. This will help decrease the possibility of riots and violence abusing human rights. This system should be supervised by the UN to ensure it's fair and justice.

- **Promote for educational programs that help to raise awareness**

Conduct a program to raise awareness about the negative impact of arms proliferation, changing the public perspective towards the usage of weapons, especially when it's used towards human rights violations. These programs encourage people to establish a new perspective of aiming for solutions without violence involved.

- **Promote Multi-party dialogue that helps to resolve issues**

Though similar solutions were hosted before, they weren't very successful. One reason is due to both sides aren't able to balance the outcomes they wish to reach. One possible solution might be letting the United Nations to intervene in these dialogues, to make fair and just decisions for both sides. And tries to bring both sides within an agreement.

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