

Defense minister threatens to audit NGOs manipulating Papua issue

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M. Rizal Maslan, Jakarta - Defense Minister Juwono Sudarsono says that he has the names of six to seven non-government organisations (NGO) that are manipulating the Papua issue. Sudarsono is asking the NGOs to be transparent about their funding sources. If not, they will be audited.

"I am only asking the NGOs to please be transparent and open so that they won't be audited", said Sudarsono following a friendly discussion with journalists at the ministry of defense on Jl. Medan Merdeka Barat in Central Jakarta on April 7.

Sudarsono however refused to give the names of the NGOs. "I've forgotten their names, but [we] have a list and their addresses", he said.

According to Sudarsono the NGOs must be open about who is providing funding, the total amount received and their ties to the donors. "Because NGOs often challenge the government over questions of transparency. So it would be good if they are transparent about their finances", he explained.

Sudarsono said that the government still objects to the 42 Papuans being given visas on the ground that they are being pursued by the military. "It's not true. If supposing Howard (Australian Prime Minister John Howard) give visas to [people] seeking the basic necessities of life as economic migrants, the government wouldn't have a problem. I think the issue would be finished", said Sudarsono in an outburst of emotion (aan)

[Translated by James Balowski.]

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