

# West Papuan student urges solidarity

Friday 21 July 2006, by [BALDUS Hendrik Ervan](#), [DALLAS Alby](#) (Date first published: 19 July 2006).

**Hendrik Ervan Baldus from the People's Democratic Party of Indonesia is the chairperson of the Papuan National Student Front. He attended the 35<sup>th</sup> Resistance national conference [in Australia], giving greetings from both organisations.**

Baldus recounted the history of two centuries of Dutch colonial rule in West Papua and the sham United Nations referendum, which in 1969 formally handed Indonesia control of the resource-rich province. (Indonesia had formally administered West Papua since 1963.) He outlined the military and economic repression experienced by West Papuans and said that, while the country is rich in minerals and other natural resources, most West Papuans still live by subsistence farming.

"The economy is driven by non-Papuans and the profits from companies [such as the giant Freeport goldmine] are not being put into health, education and agricultural improvements", Baldus said. He said that whether or not West Papua is a "failed state" is hotly debated within Indonesia. But, he added, this was rather academic because only when West Papua is truly free can its people begin to address the problems facing them. "West Papua must be guaranteed self-determination, regardless of what path they choose to take, without fear or coercion", Baldus said.

Asked what Australians could do, Baldus said they should pressure both the Australian and Indonesian governments to support Papuan independence and to demand an immediate end to joint military exercises. "Without full support, the struggle will be very difficult, even after independence has been won. Australians must ensure that the Howard government supports the West Papuan people, otherwise the backward West Papuan economy will ensure that we remain slaves to imperialism."

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