

UN Human Rights Committee - West Papuans call on Australia to stop supporting occupation

Wednesday 25 October 2017, by [SMITH Kerry](#) (Date first published: 21 October 2017).

Free West Papua Campaign has responded to Australia's election to the United Nations Human Rights Committee by calling on the Australian government to cease supporting Indonesia's brutal occupation of West Papua.

In a Facebook statement [[1](#)], FWPC said: "It has to break with the tradition of successive Australian governments that have simply turned a blind eye to the human rights atrocities that have occurred on our doorstep for decades, and instead take a principled stance."

Ahead of the election, FWPC said in an October 12 statement [[2](#)]: "How can Australia be on the UN human rights committee but refuse to speak up for the rights of West Papua, Australia's closest neighbour and former ally in WW2?"

"Australia to take up a seat on the UN human rights council promising to speak up for human rights in the Pacific. BUT, Australian government refuses to speak up for Human rights in West Papua including West Papua's legal right of self determination."

The statement referred to a mass petition signed by people across occupied West Papua, despite Indonesia declaring the petition illegal: "It is truly remarkable that 1.8 million Papuans (about 70 per cent of the population) have signed a petition — specifically banned by the Indonesian Government — calling on the United Nations to conduct a free vote about independence.

"The preparation of this ambitious petition and the attempted presentation in New York to the UN's decolonisation committee marks a dramatic new chapter in West Papua's history, but it is also certain to present serious challenges for the Australian Government ...

"Australia's bid for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council centres on its promise to be a voice for human rights in the Pacific. If it is to be true to this promise, it simply cannot ignore this landmark petition or the wishes of many Pacific nations to support self-determination in West Papua.

"It has to break with the tradition of successive Australian governments that have simply turned a blind eye to the human rights atrocities that have occurred on our doorstep for decades, and instead take a principled stance.

"The people of West Papua have a right to express their desires freely — a right the Australian Government should be willing to defend. We shouldn't put trade and so-called pragmatism ahead of our values and moral duty to stand up for what is right ...

"It can continue to disappoint by trying to water down human rights resolutions — as it did last month regarding the violence unfolding in Myanmar, or it could find some courage and become a

consistent and principled voice for human rights in the Asia Pacific region.

“These 1.8 million Papuans just risked jail and violent reprisals in an attempt to have their voices heard. Rather than help silence them, the Australian Government can and should help ensure they are now heard on the world stage.”

FWPC said on September 27 that exiled West Papuan independence campaigner Benny Wenda has presented the bound petition to the UN’s decolonisation committee, which monitors the progress of former colonies towards independence.

KERRY SMITH

P.S.

* Green Left. Saturday, October 21, 2017:

<https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/west-papuans-call-australia-stop-supporting-occupation>

Footnotes

[1] <https://www.facebook.com/freewestpapua/posts/10159489381860010>

[2] <https://www.facebook.com/freewestpapua/posts/10159489381860010>