

# 194 church leaders in Papua call for end to military operations, peace talks

Thursday 18 November 2021, by [KEPNO Atamus](#) (Date first published: 12 November 2021).

**One hundred and ninety-four Catholic leaders from across Papua have explicitly called for an end to military operations in Papua. The Pastors hope that dialogue and reconciliation will be the solution to resolve the prolonged conflict in Papua.**

Pastor Alberto John Bunai, Pr, said that the government was ecstatic about the success of the 20<sup>th</sup> National Games in Papua, but the people were deeply saddened by what was being suffered by God's communities in Nduga, Intan Jaya, Puncak, Kiwirok and Maybrat.

"In order to solve the roots of the problem what is needed is dialogue and reconciliation in a dignified manner for the sake of resolving the prolonged conflict in the land of Papua," said Bunai during a press conference titled a Moral Call by 194 Catholic Pastors on Thursday November 11 at the Bright World of Christ Parish in Waena, Jayapura city, Papua.

It is the church's duty to articulate the cries of God's communities who have no voice, continued Bunai. The government must halt the ongoing military operations which have resulted in the killing of civilians, violence and people being displaced in several parts of Papua.

"Stop the military operations. Release the civilians who were wrongly arrested in Maybrat. In Kiwirok hundreds of residents' homes have been bombed by security forces. Rocket fired from the air using helicopters. But several failed to explode. Hundreds of civilians are reported to have fled to Papua New Guinea. There are no estimates yet on the number of deaths and destroyed homes. Many people are sick and have died of hunger in the forests. Right now the people need humanitarian assistance," he said.

"The government should create peace for the sake of humanity, justice, truth and the safety of the indigenous Papuan people", he said.

Pastor Bunai revealed that there have been around 58 ideological and political conflicts between indigenous Papuans and the Indonesian government, conflicts which have triggered armed violence in Papua to this day.

"So the principle role of the Church is as the bearer of peace and upholder of justice, it cannot be silent in the face of these realities, we must speak out for those who have no voice", he said.

According to the church leaders, they are speaking out for the sake of security and peace, not in the political interests of individuals or groups or the like.

"We are speaking out because we long for an atmosphere of security, so that there is peace, justice and harmony in the land of Papua."

They further said that because of the interests of a group of elite involved in gold mining in Papua,

indigenous Papuans have become victims of violence and lost their communal land rights.

“Papuans just become victims or become victims in regions because of the exploitation of natural resources without justice or transparency. As we know from the results of research by the YLBHI [Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation], the JATAM [Mining Advocacy Network], ICW [Indonesian Corruption Watch], the Kontras [Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence], the Walhi [Indonesian Forum for the Environment], the Indonesian People’s Fraction, Greenpeace Indonesia and the Sajogja Institute,” he explained.

Pastor Agustinus Yerwuan, OFM, took the opportunity to remind people that everyone is created by God in his image and were placed on different parts of the earth including Papua.

“Because of this all those who live in the land of Papua and all related parties must remember this well as religious people and also as people who are concerned about peace and love,” said Yerwuan.

The Franciscan pastor hopes that all parties will pray and cooperate to bring an end to the armed conflict in the land of Papua.

“Our hope is for prayers and cooperation between all parties, social elements, including those with interests which often disturb security and peace, the TNI [Indonesian military] and Polri [Indonesian police] as well as the TPNPB [West Papua National Liberation Army] must end the war or reach a ceasefire, then maintain a humanity which is just and civilised in this land of Papua,” he said.

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