

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

28 November 2013

Index: ASA 21/039/2013

Indonesia: Investigate ill-treatment of protesters and intimidation of journalists in Papua

Amnesty International is concerned about allegations that police ill-treated protesters involved in a pro-independence protest in Papua as well as intimidated journalists who were covering it.

On 26 November, police arrested at least 28 political activists including three women who participated in a pro-independence protest in Waena, Jayapura organized by the West Papua National Committee (*Komite Nasional Papua Barat*, KNPB). According to a human rights lawyer who saw them in detention at the Jayapura City police station, there were indications that they had been beaten after they were arrested. Some of the detainees had bruises or swelling on their mouth, eyes, forehead and body. At least 12 people are still in police custody.

The authorities must ensure that all those who are detained have access to lawyers of their choosing and that those who are suffering injuries have immediate access to medical treatment. The authorities must also ensure a prompt, thorough, and effective investigation into the allegations of ill-treatment by the police and ensure that those suspected of involvement, including persons with command responsibility, are prosecuted in proceedings which meet international standards of fairness. Victims should also be provided with reparations.

Amnesty International continues to receive credible reports of human rights violations committed by the security forces in the provinces of Papua and West Papua, including torture and other ill-treatment, unnecessary and excessive use of force and firearms and possible unlawful killings. Investigations into such reports are rare and only few perpetrators have been brought to justice. The lack of accountability and the failure to criminalize acts of torture in the Criminal Code contributes to this culture of impunity.

Our organization is also concerned that the Jayapura City police personnel reportedly intimidated at least three journalists while they were covering the KNPB protest in Jayapura. Police personnel approached them and hit one of the journalists in the head. Police also attempted to grab their cameras and told them to leave the area. One of the journalists was intimidated by the police to delete photos he had taken of the protest.

Journalists play a crucial role in exposing human rights violations and abuses, especially in Papua where authorities restrict access to international observers, including human rights organizations and journalists. Harassment, intimidation and attacks against journalists and human rights defenders can have a chilling effect, and can contribute to a climate of impunity.

Amnesty International calls on the authorities to investigate all allegations of attacks, intimidation and harassment of journalists in Papua and ensure they – and others – are not obstructed from conducting their legitimate work.

Amnesty International does not take a position on the political status of Papua, or any other province of Indonesia. However, people in Papua and elsewhere in Indonesia should be able to peacefully express their views free from harassment, threats and the fear of criminalization. Our organization believes that the right to freedom of expression includes the right to peacefully advocate referendums, independence or any other political solutions that do not involve incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.