

Public Statement

12 November 2001

AI Index ASA 21/052/2001 - News Service Nr. 199

Indonesia: Amnesty International condemns the killing of Papuan independence leader

Amnesty International condemns the killing of Theys H. Eluay, a leading independence activist in Papua. The organization calls on the Indonesian government to immediately initiate a credible and impartial investigation so that those responsible for the killing can be brought to justice and the high levels of tension between the authorities and pro-independence supporters in Papua are not exacerbated.

Theys Eluay was abducted on his way to his home to Sentani Kota after attending an event organized by the Special Forces Command (Kopassus) in the Papuan capital of Jayapura late in the evening of 10 November 2001. His body was found the following morning in Koya, close to the border of Papua New Guinea. The motive for and perpetrators of the killing remain unclear.

Theys Eluay's driver, Aristoteles Masoka, is still missing and there are grave concerns for his safety. He called Theys Eluay's family on Saturday evening to tell them that they had been stopped by "non-Papuans", but the phone line was cut before he could relay anymore details. This was the last time he was heard from.

According to news reports, the police have launched an investigation. However, in the past the police have not proved to be impartial in investigations of incidents where members of the security forces may be involved.

Background

Theys Eluay had previously been a member of the provincial parliament and a supporter of Papua's integration with Indonesia. However, in recent years he had become a vocal supporter of independence. In February 2000 he became Chair of the Papuan Presidium Council, created to lead civilian support for Papuan independence.

He and other political leaders were briefly detained immediately after a congress in Jayapura in June 2000, in which representatives from throughout the province and from the exile community adopted a resolution calling on the Indonesian government to recognize Papuan independence. Five months later, on 29 November 2000, Theys Eluay and four other leading members of the Presidium Council were arrested and charged with "attempting to separate the state" and "expressing hatred against the government". Such charges, which were commonly used during former President Suharto's rule to silence political opponents, have come back into practice again during the last year and have been used to imprison a number of individuals for the peaceful expression of their views. The trials began in May 2001 and was ongoing at the time of Theys Eluay's death.

In November 2001 the Theys Eluay publicly rejected a new autonomy law recently adopted by parliament, which gives Papua greater control of its political and economic affairs, calling instead for talks with the government on the political future of Papua.

Despite his opposition to government policy in Papua, Theys Eluay was not trusted by all Papuans. He was suspected by some of having close links to the military and accused by members of the armed pro-independence movement, the Free Papua Movement, of undermining their military strategy to bring about independence.

Amnesty International has repeatedly expressed its concerns about the deteriorating human rights situation in Papua. The organization has called on the Indonesia government to stop using repression against the independence movement and to include them in the process of seeking a political solution which places protection of human rights and justice for past violations at its centre.

\ENDS

public document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web : <http://www.amnesty.org>
Last updated : November 12