

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/fear of torture or
ill-treatment

28 July 2000

INDONESIA

Apolos Sewa, 40, and six others

Seven people believed to be pro-independence activists were arrested after a demonstration in Papua (Irian Jaya) on 27 July. They are at risk of torture or ill-treatment in police custody.

Several hundred local people had gathered at the harbour in Sorong town to demonstrate against the arrival of hundreds of displaced people from the Moluccan islands and the local authorities' apparent failure to take responsibility for their welfare. The security forces opened fire on the demonstrators, reportedly wounding several people.

Apolos Sewa, a leading member of the pro-independence Papua Council and leader of the demonstration, was arrested by police, who kicked and beat him. He and six others arrested with him are now held in Sorong police resort (Polres). It is not known why they were arrested, or whether they have been formally charged, but all are thought to be pro-independence activists. Their arrest may be connected with a pro-independence flag-raising ceremony held in Sorong earlier that day, as well as the harbour demonstration.

According to reports from the local hospital, two people were seriously injured at the demonstration and four others required hospital treatment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There have been serious human rights violations in Papua during police and military operations against suspected pro-independence activists. Many of these violations have occurred when the security forces have forcibly dispersed people taking part in flag-raising ceremonies, a local form of protest.

These violations have continued although the Indonesian government has recently spoken of the need to find a peaceful solution to Papua's disputed political status, and has reportedly agreed to allow Papuan flags to be raised in the territory under certain conditions.

In June this year, about 3,000 people from all over Papua attended a meeting of a local body, the Papua Council, which declared Papua a sovereign territory and called on the Indonesian authorities to start talks on independence for the region. Some of those who organized the meeting have since been taken in for questioning by the police, although none are known to have been formally charged with any offence.

Hundreds of people displaced by communal violence between Christians and Muslims in the nearby Moluccan islands have recently arrived in Papua. Some of these people are armed, and their presence has been regarded by some Papuans as aggravating an already tense situation in the province.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in Bahasa Indonesia, English or your own language:

- asking for guarantees that Apolos Sewa and the six other people detained in Sorong Polres will not be tortured or ill-treated, and asking that they be given immediate access to their families, lawyers and, if necessary, medical treatment;
- urging the authorities to either charge them with a recognisably criminal offence or release them immediately;
- calling on the authorities to launch an immediate and impartial investigation into the reported use of excessive force and allegations of ill-treatment by the security forces in Sorong on 27 July;
- urging the authorities to ensure that anyone suspected of committing human rights violations be suspended from duty and brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Chief of police for Papua
Brig. Gen. S Y Wenas
Head of Regional Police Papua
Jl. Sam Ratulangie No. 8
Jayapura, Papua
Indonesia

Telegrams: Police Chief, Jayapura, Papua, Indonesia

Fax: + 62 967 33763

Salutation: Dear Chief of Police

National police chief
Lt. Gen. Rusdihardjo
Kapolri
Markas Besar Kepolisian RI
Jl. Trunojoyo 3
Kebayoran Baru
Jakarta Selatan
Indonesia

Fax: + 62 21 720 7277

Salutation: Dear Lt. General

COPIES TO:

Mr Hasballah Saad
State Minister of Human Rights Affairs
Jl Kuningan Timur M 2/5
Jakarta 12950
Indonesia

Fax: +62 21 5256855

and to diplomatic representatives of Indonesia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 8 September 2000.