

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### Indonesia: End attacks on freedom of expression in Papua

Amnesty International calls on President Joko Widodo to take immediate steps to end Indonesian security forces' increasing attacks on freedom of expression in the country's Papuan region. On the eve of the president's visit to the region, at least 264 political activists there have been arbitrarily arrested and detained by the Indonesian police over the last week, in a systematic clampdown on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Political activists from the West Papua National Committee (*Komite Nasional Papua Barat*, KNPB) and People's Regional Parliament (*Parlemen Rakyat Daerah*, PRD) had planned peaceful protests around the 52<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the handover of Papua to the Indonesian government by the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) on 1 May 1963.

In West Papua province, the Manokwari district police arrested 12 KNPB activists on 30 April 2015 while they were distributing flyers about the planned demonstration in Manokwari city. The following day, the police arrested more than 200 protesters who were on their way to a demonstration near the office of the Manokwari Papua Customary Council. Security forces, both police and military, also used excessive force to disperse a peaceful demonstration in Kaimana city on 1 May and arrested two KNPB activists.

In Papua province, police arrested at least 15 KNPB and one PRD activist in Merauke on 1 May to prevent them organizing a demonstration. While in Jayapura, the local district police arrested 30 KNPB activists on the same day as they were walking to the Papua Parliament's office, the site of a planned demonstration. According to the police the arrests took place as these groups did not have permission to undertake the protests.

While most activists have been released without charge, these arbitrary arrests highlight the on-going repressive environment faced by political activists in the Papuan region.

Amnesty International recognizes that the Indonesian government has the duty and the right to maintain public order on its territory. However, it must ensure that any restrictions on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are no more than are permitted under international human rights law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Indonesia is a State party.

Further, under Indonesian law, groups organizing public protests are only required to inform the police. However, these regulations are constantly ignored by the security forces in Papua who continue to unnecessarily restrict various form of protest against the state by students, political groups and human rights non-governmental organizations. In some cases, security forces have used excessive force against peaceful protesters.

Amnesty International is also concerned about the charges against five members of the Federal Republic of West Papua (*Negara Republik Federal Papua Barat*, NRPFB), a Papuan pro-independence group. The five – Don Flassy, Lawrence Mehue, Mas Jhon Ebied Suebu, Onesimus Banundi and Elias

Ayakeding – were arrested on their return to Papua after meeting Indonesia's Minister of Defence Ryamizard Ryacudu on 10 April 2015 and have been charged with "rebellion" (*makar*) under Article 106 of Indonesia's Criminal Code. The Indonesian authorities have used this article, along with Article 110 of the Criminal Code, to criminalize dozens of peaceful pro-independence political activists over the last decade. Amnesty International continues to call for their immediate and unconditional release.

Amnesty International does not take a position on the political status of Papua, or any other province of Indonesia. 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.

The visit of President Joko Widodo to Papua on 8 May 2015 presents a real opportunity for him to show that his government will be shifting away from the repressive policies of the past and will seek a credible solution to address the human rights violations faced by Papuans. The President should begin by publicly instructing the security forces to respect and protect the right of all Papuans to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and immediately and unconditionally releasing all prisoners of conscience.