



Centre for International Governance and Justice

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Issues Paper 14

December 2009



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**CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE
AND JUSTICE ISSUES PAPER NO. 14**

December 2009

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Australian National University 2009

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry

Hernawan, Budi J.

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9780980683752

Issues paper (Australian National University. Centre for
International Governance and Justice) ; 14

Social conflict--Papua (Indonesia).

Social movements--Papua (Indonesia).

Political violence--Papua (Indonesia).

Terrorism--Papua (Indonesia).

Papua (Indonesia)--Autonomy and independence movements.

Papua (Indonesia)--Politics and government.

Papua (Indonesia)--Social conditions.

Australian National University. Centre for International
Governance and Justice.

320.90951

Terror, Resistance and Trauma in Papua (Indonesia)

By *Budi Hernawan OFM**

Papua recently attracted the attention of the international community, and in particular of Australia, when Australian citizen Drew Grant was killed in a shooting incident in the early morning of 11 July 2009 in the Freeport Mining area in Tembagapura, Papua (*The Jakarta Globe*, 13 July 2009). This killing ignited a series of violent acts in the world largest gold and copper mine site. Police are yet to provide an explanation of the incident. The shooting immediately sparked speculation in the public and international media forcing a highly-ranked representative of the Indonesian Government to provide a public statement. On 16 July the Minister of Defence, Yuwono Sudarsono, claimed that a 'rogue element' in the military might have been involved in the shooting (*ABC News*, 16 July 2009).

Despite the lack of strong evidence, the police arrested and detained 9 civilians on 20 July 2009 and charged them with murder, even though the unidentified gunmen continued to engage in acts of shooting (*The Jakarta Post*, 12/8/09). This story sounds familiar for many Papuans, recalling memories of a similar incident in August 2002, when one Indonesian and two American teachers were shot dead in an ambush at the Freeport Mining site.

Such an incident might represent the spectre of terror that marks the landscape of Freeport mining area (Ballard 2002) and has shaped *memoria passionis* of the Papuans as a whole. As a response to the repeated terror, the Papuans expressed their opposition to be continuously blamed as a scapegoat. In a rarely issued public statement dated 15 July 2009, Kelly Kwalik, the leader of the Organisasi Pembebasan Papoea Merdeka (OPM) in the Timika area, expressed his strong denial that he or his group was involved in the attack in any way (Kwalik 2009). This act illustrates the resistance aspect in Papua that responds to prolonged oppressive mechanisms that sacrifice Papuans. Over time, terror and resistance have become a dialectic that leaves the Papuans traumatised and forms an unbreakable cycle. This current pattern of terror needs to be understood within Papua's broader historical context and the legacy of the region's early history.

This paper does not intend to provide an in-depth examination of Papua's history. Rather, it aims to reflect on the prolonged terror, resistance movements and trauma that have characterised Papua to date. Yet in order to do so, we need to trace the historical context, including in particular the transfer of this area to Indonesian administration on 1 May 1963 by the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA), under Article XII of the 1962 New York Agreement.

The paper begins by summarising the key arguments that scholars suggested underpinned the power struggle between Indonesia and the Netherlands. Secondly, it discusses the establishment of control mechanisms that have resulted in a dialectic of terror and resistance. Thirdly, it briefly explores trauma as an impact of the dialectic of terror and resistance.

I. The Power Struggle of the 1960s

Many publications have been written, from various perspectives, on the power struggle between the Netherlands and Indonesia over control and access to West New Guinea (WNG). All authors agree that the Cold War played a decisive role in directing the political negotiations between the

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Netherlands and Indonesia towards a situation that supported the Indonesian claim over West New Guinea (Saltford 2003; Drooglever 2008; Vlasblom 2004; Tjondronegoro 1977). Since the 1949 Round Table Conference (RTC), both Indonesia and the Netherlands acknowledged that they could not resolve their disagreement in regard to WNG.

Indonesia, which preferred to call WNG “West Irian” (WI), argued that WI had been part of the Netherlands colonial possessions. So under the transfer of sovereignty as agreed during the RTC, West Irian had to be handed over to Indonesia (Yamin 1965; Lâam 2000). Moreover, the Indonesian founding fathers extended their argument to the era of Majapahit and Sriwijaya Kingdoms, when WI had been part of their territory (Yamin 1956; Tjondronegoro 1977). Therefore, Soekarno strongly rejected the Dutch argument on self-determination for the Papuans at the front of the international media in Tokyo on 20 September 1961 by arguing:

I know also what such a policy of ‘self-determination’ under foreign supervision can bring about. The application of such a policy is not new for us. In Van Mook’s time such a policy of so called ‘self-determination’ resulted in the formation of a ‘Free East Sumatra’, a ‘Free South Sumatra’, a ‘Free Pasundan’ (West Java), a ‘Free East Indonesia’, and other so called autonomous territories. In doing so, Van Mook actually balkanised Indonesia....I reject this so called ‘self-determination’ policy of the Dutch Government. This policy leads only to trouble in the future. (Departemen Penerangan RI 1962:93).

This line of argument has been embedded in the mindset of the Indonesian authority ever since and it is repeatedly expressed in official government documents (Tjondronegoro 1977; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Indonesia to the UN 2003).

The Netherlands, on the other hand, argued that the territory of New Guinea was excluded from the transfer of sovereignty on two grounds:

[1] in view of the marked ethnological, cultural and religious differences between Indonesians and Papuans and [2] because the Papuan population had not been in a position to express themselves freely on their political status. The proclamation of Indonesia independence of 17 August 1945 could in no way constitute an expression of will by the Papuan people as there was, because of wartime circumstances, no means of communication with New Guinea. (Memorandum 1961).

These two positions were inherently at odds with each other, but due to the influence of the US (Saltford 2003:12; Drooglever 2008; Lâam 2000:120), the Netherlands signed the 1962 New York agreement and handed over the territory to UNTEA. Six weeks later it transferred the territory to the Indonesian authorities.

Therefore, it is not a surprise that Indonesia immediately installed any key institution that embodied its philosophy of sovereignty, including, but not limited to, the Territorial Commander of the military on 17 May 1963 (Dinas Penerangan Kodam XVII/ Tjenderawasih 1971:102), the University of Cenderawasih in 1965, and the agreement with Freeport McMoran in 1967 (Vlasblom 2004) that represented power, knowledge and economy, respectively. Even the first infiltration group, Pasukan Gerilja 100, consisting of 29 personnel, was sent from Buru Island in Molluccas to Etna Bay in Papua on 30 November 1960 (Cholil 1971:57). It was very obvious that the issue of WNG was not merely rhetoric but it was a matter of sovereignty of a newly emerging nation-state vis-à-vis a colonial power. It was these early contests over WNG which significantly constituted the nature of the Indonesian state.

II. The Dialectic of Terror and Resistance

While the transition of power was under way, the Indonesian administration took all necessary measures, including coercive measures, to ensure that the result of the UN supervised plebiscite was in favour of Indonesia. Patchy records of the 1963-1969 history reported at least nine cases of torture as a result of the implementation of coercive measures to oppress dissidents opposing Indonesia (Vlasblom 2004). Often these dissidents were pursuing the right to self-determination guaranteed by the 1962 New York Agreement. For example, the Mee people in the Paniai region expressed their strong opposition to the Indonesian presence by attacking the military post and the government offices in Enarotali, the district capital. The incident began in February 1969 and continued until August 1969 (Giay 1993; Djopari 1993; Vlasblom 2004).

The ongoing resentment eventually culminated in the creation of a movement called Organisasi Pembebasan Papoea Merdeka (OPM) (Vlasblom 2004; Djopari 1993). OPM was established in 1964 in Manokwari as the most outstanding reaction to the presence of the Indonesian authorities. Once the so-called "Act of Free Choice" unanimously agreed that Papua would be integrated into Indonesia, General Soeharto, who had recently installed Orde Baru (the New Order), strengthened Indonesian control over the territory through an extensive and centralised military command. At the same time, OPM had inaugurated its first battle against the Indonesian authority. Its guerilla war resulted in 17 major attacks on the military and police installations across Papua during 1964-1977 (Djopari 1993: 109; Vlasblom 2004).

For the Papuans, OPM symbolises resistance against the terror that has tried to control the Papuans through fear-controlled mechanisms. Under the New Order regime, Soeharto deployed a highly centralised military command to eradicate communism in 1965 (Roosa 2008:38). As a consequence, the Indonesian authority exercised its power through its military commands across Papua, from the village level (Babinsa) up to the provincial level even before WNG was officially integrated into Indonesia. The top and key positions of the local governments were occupied by top-ranked military officers and various special military operations were launched to eradicate the separatist groups of OPM, including Operasi Sadar (1965-1967), Operasi Bharatayuda (1967-1969), Operasi Wibawa (1969), Operasi Jayawijaya (1977), Operasi Sapu Bersih I and II (1981) and the status of Daerah Operasi Militer (DOM/ Military Operation Zone) during 1980s until 1998.

Having combated the communist threat through the use of torture (Roosa 2008:34), the Orde Baru regime introduced a similar method to Papua. According to the cases that I have collected on torture in Papua since 1963, 393 individual cases of torture across Papua have been documented, noting the identity of victims and a factual description. A further 14 cases require further documentation. My preliminary research shows that most of the victims are farmers, males and highlanders who live in the rural areas. Only two cases involve victims who were OPM members, with none being an OPM leader. All female victims were sexually abused, raped or sexually enslaved. Some victims were detained for a short period of time, but most victims were never charged nor brought before a court. On the side of perpetrators, the 2000 Abepura case of torture is the only case where the perpetrators (two police officers) were brought to the human rights court and eventually acquitted. Therefore, the perpetrators have enjoyed complete impunity.

Another distinctive characteristic that might differentiate the Papua torture from the 1965 situations in Aceh and Timor Leste is that no report shows any particular places designated for a torture chamber. Most cases were deliberately committed in front of a public audience, whilst some occurred in ordinary military and police posts.

Given that most victims were never charged or sentenced, and many were tortured in public, I would argue that torture in Papua does not aim at extracting real information on OPM. Instead,

torture represents a larger machinery that aims to control the whole community by conjuring and maintaining the spectre of terror. The survivors of torture remain living in their own families and communities and thus share their stories with them. By telling their stories, the survivors inadvertently transfer and reproduce the mark of terror into the community and thus reinforce its impact on their lives. The authorities might assume that such practice will deter the whole community from joining the resistance movements and eventually eradicate the OPM itself.

By deploying torture, the authority uses killings as the last resort since the corpses would not be able to pass on any stories to the daily life. Within the Melanesian cultural context that is highly marked by reciprocity and retribution when it comes to any communal dispute. Any unpunished and uncompensated crime like torture has become unbearable not only for the survivors but also for the whole community because it destroys the harmony within the community that maintains the public order (Harrison 1993). Moreover, victims have to face the harsh reality that none of the perpetrators acknowledge their deeds even before the court.

In fact, the resistance movement continues to grow. Its political element was transformed into a political body of Presidium Dewan Papua (PDP/ Papuan Presidium Council) during the Second Papuan Congress in 2000. This resilient development and transformation might signify the adaptability of this movement to respond to the terror strategy. Following the 2000 Congress, PDP has embarked on its political campaign based on the two key arguments similar to the ones proposed by the Dutch in 1960s, that is the cultural and ethnic (the religious element is excluded) distinctiveness and the right to self-determination during the 1969 plebiscite.

While the military continues its mission to eradicate OPM, the Indonesian authorities seemingly are not prepared to engage in any discourse related to these two key arguments. This attitude has led to a deadlock and the absence of positive means in the last 46 years (Braithwaite 2008) which was marked by the declaration of the Papuan Presidium Council on 1 December 2008 that declared Papua as an emergency zone (Papua Zona Darurat) and sent an urgent appeal to the international community to act upon the endangered indigenous Papuans.

III. The Impact of Trauma

The third key element of this Paper is the impact of the dialectic of terror and resistance on the people. Little research has been done in this area compared to the large amount of research on the historical and legal aspects of the Papuan dispute. The voices of the torture survivors in Papua are represented by the local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that documented their narratives and brought them to any legal channel available. Only the 1995 Timika case was jointly exposed by both Bishop Herman Müningghoff OFM and the Australian Council For Overseas Aid (ACFOA). Aside from the restriction to the foreign human rights organisations and journalists, this fact shows that the local is the real partner for the survivors.

From the available documentation on torture in Papua, a big gap is the account of trauma on the survivors and the community. The major study on politically motivated torture and the healing of the torture survivors in Southeast Asia shows that:

[T]rauma experience and exposure for more than three trauma events negatively predicted mental health trauma. Mental illness was associated with impaired physical function and high demand for health services. Risk of mental illness fell across time. (Quiroga and Jaranson 2005:14).

Since the Papuan torture survivors were exposed to repeated trauma experience, it can be assumed that those people suffer from mental health trauma that might impair their physical function.

“Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life” (Herman 1992:33). This situation might be exacerbated by the poor health facilities in the rural areas where most torture survivors reside, meaning they might not have been given proper treatment for their injury.

One of the Papuan political refugees in Australia acknowledged that the impact of electric shock during the interrogation at the military custody in Papua and the prolonged solitary confinement in a prison have caused arthritis and spinal cord problems years after the actual torture. Fortunately, this person receives proper medical treatment in Australia that sustains this person’s life.

Judith Herman summarised the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) of the torture survivors into three major categories: ‘hyperarousal’, which causes a permanent self-alarming mechanism; ‘intrusion’, which blocks the memory from functioning normally; and ‘constriction’, which causes numbness that shuts down the self-defence system (Herman 1992). These symptoms lead to disempowerment and disconnection with others. At the societal level, “trauma challenges five core adaptive systems: safety, attachment, justice, identity role, and existential meaning” (Quiroga and Jaranson 2005:27) because the meaning of the world is destroyed (Scary 1985).

However, the more important issue we need to address is healing. Judith Herman argues that a healing relationship comes first before everything else to regain the control of self which has been paralysed by repeated trauma. In the case of Papua, on the one hand, the oral tradition that enables a community member to share his or her experience with other members might help the Papuans to mitigate the impact of trauma on themselves and their community. On the other hand, however, no professional help is provided, so any PTSD symptom requiring professional assistance has not been treated properly. If such a thing continues to accumulate over more than four decades, one can assume that the whole community might have suffered from prolonged complex PTSD and has been impaired from developing to its full capacity.

The absence of a trauma healing centre might indicate that trauma remains denied or at least unrecognised by the authorities and the whole nation. The silence of the nation over the atrocities of 1965 in Aceh and Timor Leste also applies to the case of Papua, leaving the survivors in isolation. Such silence is only beneficial to the perpetrators.

At the societal level, in the last ten years a number of peace initiatives have been promoted by CSOs, mainly by Papuan religious leaders. They have pursued peace by working at the inter-faith level to end violence, including torture, under various banners, such as FORERI, Papua Baru (New Papua), Papua Zona Damai (Papua Zone of Peace), and Papua Tanah Damai (Papua Land of Peace). Even though the central government and the military have not yet shown interest in any of these initiatives, the local government, the police and the provincial council have participated in related activities. Such a movement might help to develop the type of healing relationship that is fundamental to trauma healing in Papua. However, much work needs to be done in the area of developing a conceptual framework that could adequately address the complex situation of traumatised Papuans and that could resonate at the highest level of the Indonesian authority. This deadlock situation has prompted the Indonesian Government Research Institute (LIPI) to propose a conceptual framework for a peaceful solution entitled Papua Road Map (Widjojo 2009), even though the key players in Jakarta exhibit little interest on this proposal.

IV. Concluding Remarks

The Papuan appeal for a dialogue with Jakarta has been repeatedly proposed by various Papuan groups since 1998. It is not yet clear to what extent Jakarta is interested in this idea or whether the recently re-elected President SBY will make it a priority to address the deadlock in Papua.

The continuing sporadic shooting in Timika (*Kompas online*, 16 August 2009) illustrates that the Papuan conflict remains neglected. This is also evident in the continuing trauma suffered by torture survivors. The spectre of terror continues to overwhelm the daily reality of Papua. So it is essential that the authorities take measures to stop the ongoing violence as one of the key prerequisites towards a more comprehensive and long-term approach. Otherwise, the Papuans continue to be a scapegoat for the dialectic of terror and resistance. The Papua conflict is a highly complex issue to address, but as we saw in Aceh, a simple quantitative reduction in the number of military and Brimob police, as well as the prosecution of the pending human rights dossiers, might pave the way towards a comprehensive solution.

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2009

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