



CATHOLIC JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

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Media Release

Thursday 19 November 2020

Commission Calls for Australian Action on West Papua Arrests

The Catholic Justice & Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Brisbane has urged the Australian Government to put greater pressure on the Indonesian Government over continuing violence and arrests of Indigenous people in West Papua.

The call follows the arrest of over 50 Papuans attending a meeting to evaluate the special autonomy program and funding for West Papua on Tuesday 17 November in the Papuan city of Merauke.

The Commission's Executive Officer, Peter Arndt, said that the Indonesian police and military in West Papua routinely prevent Papuans from expressing their political views peacefully.

"A Catholic friend of mine who is a human rights defender was among those arrested in Merauke on Tuesday and I am very concerned about his safety and the safety of the others arrested," Mr Arndt said.

"Many Papuan church and community groups have expressed their dissatisfaction with special autonomy which has been in place for 20 years," he said.

"Indonesian security forces have stopped public demonstrations about special autonomy and arrested demonstrators over the course of this year.

"This denial of political and civil rights has been happening for years in West Papua.

"Add to this the shooting and killing of unarmed civilians, including both Catholic and Protestant pastors and church workers and you can see that West Papua is a human rights free zone and is in need of support from Australia and the rest of the world."

Mr Arndt said that both Australia and Indonesia sit on the UN Human Rights Council.

"The Indonesian Government must end the systematic abuse of human rights in West Papua if it is to have any credibility as a member of the Human Rights Council," he added.

"As a Human Rights Council member, the Australian Government must take the human rights situation in West Papua much more seriously and put stronger pressure on the Indonesian Government to end the violence and other human rights violations being committed by its military and police.

"We urge churches and other community organisations to put pressure on the Australian Government to take stronger action to end the violence and denial of basic freedoms in West Papua.

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“The Australian Defence Force and the Australian Federal Police both train and support their Indonesian counterparts and this cannot continue without a significant change in the way Indonesian security forces operate in West Papua” he said.

For comments and further information, please contact Peter Arndt on +61 409 265 476.