

Radicalisation and Dialogue in Papua 11 Mar 2010 19:39:15 GMT Source: Crisis Group *R euters and AlertNet are not responsible for the content of this article or for any external internet sites. The views expressed are the author's alone.*

Jakarta/Brussels, 11 March 2010: A substantive dialogue between the Indonesian government and Papuan leaders could help stem political radicalisation in the country's easternmost province.

[*Indonesia: Radicalisation and Dialogue in Papua*](#),* the latest report from the International Crisis Group, charts the radicalisation of activists from the central highlands, the province's mountainous spine, and links a small group of them, the pro-independence National Committee for West Papua (Komite Nasional Papua Barat, KNPB), to some of the violence that erupted in Papua in 2009. The KNPB is not broadly representative and its tactics are decried by other activists, but its message – that peaceful methods have failed to produce results – resonates more widely.

“A dialogue, if carefully prepared, offers the possibility of addressing longstanding grievances, without calling Indonesian sovereignty into question”, says Sidney Jones, senior adviser to Crisis Group's Asia program. “But it will only succeed if all issues -- political and historical, not just economic -- are on the table, and President Yudhoyono gives it visible, public backing”.

The urgency of dialogue is underscored by the upsurge of violence in the second half of 2009 and early 2010. The report examines several incidents where members of the KNPB either claimed responsibility for the violence, although in one case playing no direct role, or appeared to be working in co-ordination with local guerrilla commanders of the Free Papua Movement's National Liberation Army (Tentara Pembebasan Nasional/Organisasi Papua Merdeka, TPN/OPM). It also looks in detail at the shooting attacks near the giant Freeport copper and gold mine. In all cases, actions by security forces contributed to the problem, sometimes through poorly targeted arrests that angered the community or through demands for money that made the presence of troops a burden.

Violence and radicalisation in Papua could increase unless political frustrations are addressed. The path to talks will not be easy, however. Some in the central government believe that any discussion of non-economic issues will only fuel support for independence. Some Papuan activists believe that dialogue should only take place with international mediation and with the political endgame left open. Even some of those who accept Indonesian sovereignty as a given

believe that Jakarta has a history of promising but not delivering. But the radicalisation of the KNPB is proof of the dangers of leaving political grievances to fester.

Papua is not the land of horrors that some activists would like to portray. It has huge problems, but there also have been huge changes over the last decade. The Indonesian government repeatedly shoots itself in the foot by restricting access and preventing a full picture of Papua from emerging.

“The best way to marginalise the radicals is not to lock them up”, says Jim Della-Giacoma, Crisis Group South East Asia project director. “It is to throw the doors wide open to the central highlands and elsewhere in Papua, and let NGOs and journalists report back”.

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