

Several Reasons Why West Papua Should Get Its Freedom... Immediately!

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Global Research, September 02, 2019

Region: [Oceania](#)

Theme: [History](#)

More than ten years ago, in Nadi, Fiji, during a UN conference, I was approached by the Minister of Education of Papua New Guinea (PNG).

He was deeply shaken, troubled, his eyes full of tears: "Please help our children," he kept repeating:

"Indonesian army, TNI, is kidnapping our little girls in the villages, raping them, and then... in the most sadistic way cutting off their nipples and clitorises. And if they speak, entire villages get burned down in retribution. Many already have been. Some children managed to escape; to cross the border, from West Papua to PNG. Now they are staying in our refugee camps, but our country is poor; we are hardly coping. Please come to Papua, and we will take you to the border region... please tell the story to the world..."

What followed, I described in detail in my book, [Oceania](#). In brief, I managed to scramble some money for my trip from Samoa back to PNG, I found the Minister of Education, but he refused to take me to the camps. I contacted his subordinates as well as local journalists, and was told the same thing:

"Nothing has changed; nothing improved; but the Minister was bribed and intimidated by the omnipresent Indonesian embassy."

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Now even the mainstream media in Java, including the generally pro-regime English-language daily *The Jakarta Post*, has had to react to the terrible events which are taking place on the occupied territory of West Papua. On August 19, 2019, Evi Mariani, wrote:

"Papuan are said to have endured racial discrimination from the majority Javanese. A political activist from Papua, Filep Karma, wrote in 2014 in his book, [Seakan Kitorang Setengah Binatang: Rasialisme Indonesia di Tanah Papua](#) (As If We Are Half Animal: Indonesia's Racism in Papua Land), that he experienced racism when he studied in a state university in Surakarta, Central Java. He often heard his friends calling Papuans "monkeys", he said in the book.

The book speaks volumes of the crimes against humanity facing Papuans on their own land."

But what really is happening in West Papua?

Of course, foreign journalists are banned from entering and reporting freely from there. Only official Indonesian journalists, basically lackeys of the regime, are regularly flown to the most devastated and oppressed areas. Their lies and twisted 'reporting' are the only things that the world is 'allowed to see'.

Working for years in South Pacific (Oceania), I visited on several occasions, both Papua New Guinea (PNG), and Vanuatu, where the West Papuan resistance has been regrouping. I also have some 25 years of experience, of working in Indonesia itself. And I used to cooperate with a late professor from Sydney University, Peter King, a man who basically dedicated his life to the plight of West Papua. I spoke at Sydney University, side by side with him, recalling my experience from East Timor; from the Indonesian occupation, where 30-40% of the population lost their life, and where I, myself, was savagely tortured in 1996, for trying to expose the systematic gang rapes committed by the Indonesian military, TNI.

While living in Oceania, I spent days discussing the occupation with the West Papuan refugees, who resided outside Port Moresby, the capital of PNG.

I managed to enter West Papua only once, illegally, in 1999, as a 'side-trip' while covering the horrific sectarian conflict in Ambon.

From the information and testimonies that I amassed so far, I can clearly see that the occupation of West Papua is, together with the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which is being plundered by both Rwanda and Uganda on behalf of Western corporations and governments and where approximately 8 million people already lost their lives, perhaps the most horrendous genocide taking place on our planet.

But in the region of the Great Lakes of Africa I managed to make my big documentary film, [*Rwanda Gambit*](#). While in West Papua, I would never be allowed to film, photograph or even openly talk to people. I would never be allowed to enter those monstrous mines controlled by Freeport and other corporations; mines that are being 'protected' by the corrupt and murderous Indonesian military.

Prof. Peter King and Prof. John Wing wrote in the Executive Summary to their report "Genocide in West Papua?" (Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, The University of Sydney, 2005):

"The report details a series of concerns which, if not acted upon, may pose serious threats to the survival of the indigenous people of the Indonesian province of Papua. It covers the threats posed by the Indonesian military to the province's stability, the recent increase in large scale military campaigns which are decimating highland tribal communities, the HIV/AIDS explosion and persistent Papuan underdevelopment in the face of a rapid and threatening demographic transition in which the Papuans face becoming a minority in their own land.

A "culture of impunity" exists in Indonesia which sees its highest manifestation currently in Papua and Aceh. Military operations have led to thousands of deaths in Papua and continue to cost lives, yet the Republic's armed forces act as a law unto themselves with no real accountability for crimes against the Papuan population. The report discusses a number of areas of Indonesian security forces involvement, including: illegal logging and corrupt infrastructure and construction work; destabilization and manipulation of local politics, and orchestration of attacks blamed on pro-Papuan independence groups; the introduction of illegal arms and militia training and recruitment;

and prostitution and the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The report concludes with a number of urgent recommendations to the Indonesian and Australian governments, the United Nations and other involved parties.”

Since 2005, not much has improved. Actually, things have deteriorated even further.

Eliza Egret and Tom Anderson reported on August 31, 2017 in their essay [*“West Papua’s Silent Genocide”*](#):

“The occupation of West Papua receives little attention in the UK. This is, in no small part, due to Indonesia’s ban on foreign journalists and its outlawing of West Papuan social movements who try to speak out internationally. However, West Papua has not been forgotten by international corporations, including companies from the UK. For them, Indonesia’s brutal occupation of West Papua provides lucrative opportunities for profit.

Mining companies exploit the country’s vast wealth of minerals, with security for their operations provided by the Indonesian military. International arms companies profit from selling Indonesia the weapons it needs to maintain the occupation. The UK government, which gives financial support and training to Indonesian police forces, is also complicit in the repression in West Papua.

West Papuans have called on people in the UK to help stop what they describe as the silent genocide in West Papua.”

The [*Free West Papua Campaign*](#) states:

Over 500,000 civilians have been killed in a genocide against the indigenous population. Thousands more have been raped, tortured, imprisoned or ‘disappeared’ after being detained. Basic human rights such as freedom of speech are denied and Papuans live in a constant state of fear and intimidation.”

In a series of the official reports, fingers were being pointed at Indonesia and its genocidal behavior in the occupied West Papua. From the United Nations to human rights organizations, a gruesome picture has been emerging.

As mentioned by the “Free West Papua Campaign”:

“Sexual assault and rape have been repeatedly used as a weapon by the Indonesian military and police.

In a public report to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in 1999, the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women concluded that the Indonesian security forces used rape “as an instrument of torture and intimidation” in West Papua, and “torture of women detained by the Indonesian security forces was widespread”.

The Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Centre for Human Rights prepared a full report on “Rape and Other Human Rights Abuses by the Indonesian Military in Irian Jaya (West Papua), Indonesia”.

Even the otherwise 'timid' *Amnesty International* (timid when it comes to the West's allies), admits that torture, killings and other grave human rights abuses, are regularly taking place in the Indonesia-controlled territory, in its [reports on West Papua](#).

Information about sexual assaults and rapes highlighted in the above-mentioned U.N. report, is consistent with the behavior of the Indonesian military during and after the 1965-66 military coup, and later, during the occupation and genocide committed in East Timor.

It is important to point out that the Indonesian military and police are enjoying unprecedented impunity. After presiding over the murder of approximately 2 million Communists, intellectuals, teachers and members of the Chinese minority in 1965-66, no culprit has ever been sent to prison. Acts of killing are still being celebrated, publicly. Generals and officers who openly participated in the East Timor genocide, as well as in the on-going genocide in West Papua, have been holding high positions in the Indonesian governments, including the present one.

The monstrous brutality is well documented (even some mainstream media outlets like Al-Jazeera are regularly releasing [footage of torture](#) committed by the Indonesian troops), but Indonesia is never dragged through the international courts of justice. It is because Jakarta is a well-tested and greatly reliable ally of Western companies and governments. For instance, it allows many local and Western mining companies to plunder West Papua. The Indonesian President, "Jokowi", actually flies around the world, asking for "more investment", promising tax holidays, 'reforms' of already pathetic labor laws, and other pro-big-business concessions.

All this is brilliantly exposed in an Australian short (2:39 minute) satire film ["Honest Government Ad/Visit West Papua"](#).

But the world prefers to stay idle. At least for now. No mass-protest movements, like those in support of the Palestinian cause, or even the Kurdish cause.

Why is all this happening?

My close friend, the renowned Australian historian, Geoffrey Gunn, Professor Emeritus at Nagasaki University, wrote for this essay:

"The crimes committed by the Indonesian military in Papua today appear very similar to East Timor under Indonesian military occupation between 1975-1999 and with some of the same Indonesian officials involved. That would include General Wiranto the butcher of East Timor in 1999 who, far from being brought before an international tribunal Rwanda-style, enjoys cabinet-level appointment in the Jokowi government. But even when Suharto-era crimes could no longer be covered up in East Timor thanks to the courage of crusading journalists and others, so incredulously does the avowedly democratic regime in Jakarta today disallow the entry of humanitarian workers much less foreign media into Papua. If the Western-backed cover up of crimes committed in East Timor was itself a crime of complicity then Western - especially Australian - silence over the agony of the Papuan people over an even longer time frame is a crime of a special order, and with mining company, oil company interests in the fore as if this was the heart of Africa under Leopold II of Belgium."

We saw the same chilling indifference, when 30% to 40% of East Timorese were slaughtered by Indonesia. Again, and again, I was managing to illegally penetrate that then Indonesian colony, which was screaming in pain, shedding thousands and thousands of people every month. And again, and again, my stories were being rejected; no interest whatsoever shown by the mass media outlets.

Then and now. East Timor and West Papua.

And in Indonesia itself, chilling, horrifying defiance. Silence. Almost no activism, and hardly any awareness. The country lives in total denial. Like in the case of 1965-66, like in the case of East Timor; total rejection of the truth. There is near zero chance that the barbarity will stop because of the pressure 'from within'. Indonesia has proven, again and again, that after being conditioned by decades of extreme fascist ideology, fundamentalist religions, and grotesque individualism, it has no mercy, and no sympathy for its own victims. After mass killings and consistent conditioning, it is now in a serious mental, pathological state.

The government of President Jokowi is nowhere near being deep in thought, considering a referendum on independence for West Papuans. To the contrary: it is 'investing in infrastructure' in order to bring even more 'investment' from abroad, and to extract even more natural resources.

According to investigation conducted by Eliza Egret and Tom Anderson:

"The Indonesian occupation of West Papua is directly related to corporate interests. US company Freeport-McMoRan operates the Grasberg mine in Papua – the largest gold mine and the third largest copper mine in the world. Freeport's third largest shareholder, Carl Icahn, happens to be a [Special Advisor to Donald Trump](#).

According to the [Free West Papua Campaign](#):

'Freeport is Indonesia's biggest taxpayer, making billions of dollars for the Indonesian government every year. Freeport reportedly pays the Indonesian military around US \$3 million every year in 'protection money', ensuring that local West Papuans are kept out of the area.'

TIME states that "In 2015 alone, Freeport mined some \$3.1 billion worth of gold and copper here. In addition, Papua boasts timber resources worth an estimated \$78 billion."

Amos explained the history behind Freeport's mining in West Papua: "A contract was signed for Freeport to operate in West Papua before we were even part of Indonesia." With the [help of Henry Kissinger](#), Freeport was awarded the rights to pillage West Papua. Kissinger later became a Freeport board member.

Australian-British corporation Rio Tinto holds an [interest](#) in Freeport's Grasberg mine, which entitles it to 40% of production, over specified levels until 2021, and 40% of all production after 2021.

Meanwhile, British company BP continues to profit from the occupation through its massive liquified natural gas fields in Tangguh. Kugi told us: "BP's biggest operation in Southeast Asia is in West Papua, and Papuan communities are also being pushed from their land for palm oil." [According to CorpWatch](#), an indigenous community in West Papua filed a complaint against Sri Lankan company Goodhope Asia for taking over their land to create a palm

plantation.”

In the meantime, the government of Indonesia has been turning the pristine waters of Papuan Raja Ampat into a luxury diving destination, charging horrendous airfares and lodging prices, and making the mainly Western tourist live in a bubble.

And Westerners are now coming, indifferent to the fact that they are actually funding genocide, legitimizing occupation. A boycotting Raja Ampat campaign is unheard of.

Now the Papuan people are rising. Their Morning Star flag, the symbol of resistance, is waving again, all over the island.

The world should support the Papuan people. They have been suffering for decades. Their nation lost hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. Torture, rape and humiliation have been widespread ever since the beginning of the occupation. Religion has been brutally forced down the throats of the robbed people, in many areas of West Papua: ‘You either embrace Islam, or you will starve to death, after we have looted you of all that you used to possess’.

Here, Java and its Western handlers have managed to re-define colonialism, bringing it to a monstrous extreme.

It is a “Freedom or Death” situation, now. Either freedom, or, the total destruction of the nation. The Indonesian President Jokowi is on a selling spree. He is flying all over the world, offering what is left of both Indonesia, and its ‘dependencies’, to the multi-national corporations, for an extremely low price and often, tax free. Papua is not his, and he is well aware of the fact that it may soon find a way to break free from the torture chamber and the horror of Indonesian occupation. That is why he is accelerating his business activities: trying to trade as quickly as possible with what is not his to touch.

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This article was originally published on [New Eastern Outlook](#).

Andre Vltchek is a philosopher, novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist. He has covered wars and conflicts in dozens of countries. Four of his latest books are [China and Ecological Civilization](#) with John B. Cobb, Jr., [Revolutionary Optimism](#), [Western Nihilism](#), a revolutionary novel [“Aurora”](#) and a bestselling work of political non-fiction: [“Exposing Lies Of The Empire”](#). View his other books [here](#). Watch [Rwanda Gambit](#), his groundbreaking documentary about Rwanda and DR Congo and his film/dialogue with Noam Chomsky [“On Western Terrorism”](#). Vltchek presently resides in East Asia and the Middle East, and continues to work around the world. He can be reached through his [website](#) and his [Twitter](#). His [Patreon](#)

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