

The Papua Monitor: Q4/2023



January 2024 Update: Human Rights and Conflict Developments in West Papuaⁱ, Indonesia -
Covering Events from 1 October to 31 December 2023 (4th quarter 2023)

Violations	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3	2023 Q4
Torture	4 victims in 3 cases	23 victims in 4 cases	16 victims in 3 cases	6 victims in 3 cases
Freedom of expression	14 victims in 2 cases	4 victims in 2 cases	6 victims and more in 4 cases	Dozens of victims in 2 cases
Killings	17 victims in 6 cases	7 victims in 4 cases	17 victims in 6 cases	1 victim in 1 case
Disappearances	-	2 victims in 1 case	-	1 victim in 1 case
Intimidation	1 victim in 1 case	1 victim in 2 cases	4 victims in 2 cases	Dozens of victims in 1 case
Criminalisation	1 victim in 1 case	7 victims in 3 cases	2 victims in 1 case	-
Ill-treatment	46 victims in 8 cases	28 victims in 6 cases	24 victims in 4 cases	More than 13 victims in 8 cases
Cultural rights	Dozens of victims in 1 case	-	-	Dozens of victims in 1 case
Arbitrary detention	50 victims in 5 cases	100 victims in 6 cases	More than 85 victims in 11 cases	86 victims in 8 cases
Right to information	-	1 victim in 1 case	-	-
Freedom of assembly	-	93 victims in 4 cases	43 victims in 2 cases	More than 21 victims in 7 cases
TOTAL	More than 111 victims in 16 cases	155 victims in 17 cases	More than 139 victims in 21 cases	More than 102 victims in 20 cases

Table 1: Violation and victim data per quarter. A "+" symbol following a number indicates a certain count (the number given) plus an additional, less precise count (e.g., dozens, several). Each column is an independent set, reflecting the possibility of multiple violations per victim or case. Totals represent unique counts per column, not aggregate sums.

Summary

Human rights

Human rights statistics indicate an increase in public political activity through the 4th quarter of 2023. Activists and Papuan solidarity groups carried out peaceful demonstrations and worship ceremonies in [commemoration of Human Rights Day](#) on 10 December, and the [1st December](#), which marks a historic date for many Papuans. The Morning Star Flag, which many Papuans consider the most important symbol of cultural identity, was first raised on the 1st of December 1961, before the territory came under the administration of the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) on 1 October 1962. Security forces dispersed most of the protests and reportedly ill-treated protesters.

The police continue to target members of the West Papua National Committee (KNPB). Between October and December 2023, various KNPB activists were being tried in criminal proceedings or awaiting trial.

Several [KNPB members were arrested in relation to the killing of Papuan activist, Mrs Michelle Kurisi](#). Mr Agus Kosay, KNPB Chairman, and KNPB Numbay Secretary, Mr Beny Murib, were both named suspects in a case related to incitement and physical assault that occurred on 18 August 2023, in Jayapura. The [trial was launched at the Jayapura District Court](#) on 23 November 2023. Another KNPB activist, Mr Kamat, [was reported suffering from a deteriorating health condition while incarcerated in the city of Sorong](#), Papua Barat Daya Province. Lawyers succeeded in arranging medical treatment for him.

West Papua witnessed ongoing human rights violations during the reporting period. Torture, ill-treatment, extra-judicial killings, and enforced disappearances occurred, particularly in conflict zones. Security forces conducted frequent raids in indigenous villages, often shortly after clashes with the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB). Human rights observers, victims, and their families criticized the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) for its inaction. In Mappi, victim solidarity groups demanded an investigation into the shooting of nine civilians by Komnas HAM. After ten months, [neither the police nor Komnas HAM conducted a thorough investigation into the incident](#), raising concerns about justice and accountability. In October 2023, [Komnas HAM members went to the Dogiyai Regency to investigate a series of violations](#) there.

Despite the ongoing human rights crisis in West Papua, the Government's efforts to address the situation appear weak and meaningless. A [meeting between Indonesian Vice President Ma'ruf Amin and a group of human rights defenders and Papuan businessmen](#) in Papua on 10 October 2023 drew criticism for being one-sided and failing to address the root issues of human rights violations in the region. The meeting excluded a broader representation of stakeholders, including various human rights activists, churches, NGOs, and victims' families. On 13 November 2023, [the Non-Judicial Settlement Team for Past Gross Human Rights Violations \(PPHAM\) held its fourth meeting in Wamena](#) without involving the victims' families of human rights violations in Wamena.

However, the reporting period was also marked by several positive human rights developments. In Manokwari, [five police officers were sentenced to six months in prison](#) for ill-treating and extorting Mr Ahmad Widodo in the town of Manokwari, Papua Barat Province. The judges found the officers guilty of committing theft with violence under aggravating circumstances. Meanwhile, The [Indonesian Supreme Court rejected the cassation filed by four TNI soldiers accused of the murder and mutilation](#) of four Nduga residents in Mimika Regency.

In late October 2023, [residents in Amuma District faced hunger and starvation due to crop failure](#), and 11 people, including infants and adults, died due to famine and a lack of food. The Yahukimo Regency Government declared a Disaster Emergency Response status in response to the famine crisis and provided humanitarian support to affected communities.

Conflict

Most incidents of armed violence during the 4th quarter of 2023 were reported from the regencies Nduga, Maybrat, Intan Jaya, Yahukimo, and Puncak. According to data compiled by human rights defenders in various regencies across West Papua, [a total of 76,228 people, most of them indigenous Papuans, remain internally displaced](#) because of the armed conflict as of September 2023. Many [IDPs continue to suffer from various health issues due to a lack of access to medical services and sufficient food](#). The Catholic

Church urged the government to return the internally displaced persons to their hometowns. The urge was conveyed through the [Pastoral Appeal of the SKP of the Catholic Church throughout Papua issued in Sorong](#), West Papua Province, on 12 October 2023.

Political developments

The government pursues its plan to exploit natural resources through mining agricultural mega-projects in West Papua. The Indonesian government has announced its intention to [designate the Merauke Food Estate in South Papua \(Papua Selatan Province\) as a Special Economic Zone \(Kawasan Ekonomi Khusus \(KEK\)\)](#) to bolster food production and address potential food crises. The failure to integrate indigenous Papuans into the government's economic development strategy adds to the disappointment regarding the government's intentions among many indigenous Papuans. Many indigenous communities in West Papua, such as the Awyu Tribe in the Boven Digoel Regency, have in vain tried to protect their ancestral land against palm oil companies' interests, filing their case to the court. The [Jayapura State Administrative Court \(PTUN Jayapura\) rejected a lawsuit](#) filed by the indigenous Awyu Tribe in Papua Province

This distrust and disappointment became obvious during [spontaneous outbreaks of civil unrest in response to the death of former Papuan Governor](#), Lukas Enembe. He passed away in the Gatot Subroto Military Hospital (RSPAD) in Jakarta on 26 December 2023 during detention after being [sentenced to eight years imprisonment in a corruption trial](#). Many Papuans believe that the trial was highly political, as Governor Enembe was commonly perceived as committed to protecting the interests of indigenous Papuans against the central government. [Mr Enembe's health condition repeatedly dropped during the trial process while Indonesian authorities did not allow him to undergo intense medical treatment](#) in Singapore as requested by his lawyers.

International

After five Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council [had written to the Indonesian Government in May 2023](#) raising questions about several human rights violations, the Government of Indonesia has [replied to the allegations](#).

Cases

Torture & Ill-treatment

Vice-Regent beats village chief during mediation meeting in Sorong



The vice-regent of the Sorong Selatan Regency, Mr Alfons Sesa, reportedly ill-treated Mr Gad Gabriel Yandafli, the Pusu Tiligum Village chief in the Klasafet District, on 18 October 2023.

[Read more](#)

Joint security forces torture minor during armed clash in Intan Jaya - other residents allegedly tortured and houses burnt



Fifteen-year-old Mekelon Sondegau was allegedly beaten and tortured by Indonesian joint security forces during an armed clash between the Indonesian military and police and the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB) in Bajemba Village, Sugapa District, Intan Jaya Regency on 1 November 2023.

[Read more](#)

Papuan pupil reportedly injured by land mine in Intan Jaya

Misalena Hagismajau, a student of SD YPPK Titigi, was reportedly injured by a land mine on her way home from school in the Suagapa District, Intan Jaya Regency, on 9 November 2023. She sustained severe injuries to her left leg, thighs, and right toes, as well as on her arm and face.

[Read more](#)



Kupang, Nusa Tenggara Timur Province, 1 Dec: Police officers watch nationalist groups beating Papuan protesters



On 1 December 2023, Garuda and Garda Flobamora members assaulted Papuan and non-Papuan students in the city of Kupang, Nusa Tenggara Timur Province, punching them on their heads. Videos show that the police present failed to protect the students from the physical assault. At least three protesters sustained bruises.

[Read more](#)

Unlawful killings and enforced disappearances

Relatives raise allegations of enforced disappearance in Intan Jaya Regency



Damai Cartenz police task force forcefully entered a residential house in the Amaesiga Village, Sugapa District, on 10 November 2023 and arbitrarily arrested Mr Otopius Bagau. The relatives described that the security force members tortured Mr Bagau during the arrest. As relatives came to the police station, an officer stated that Mr Bagau was not there.

[Read more](#)

Military members carry out an air raid in response to TPNPB attack on mining site in Yahukimo – a total of 12 civilians reportedly killed in the attacks

Security force members reportedly attacked a gold mine at the Yi River in the Seradala District, Yahukimo Regency, Papua Pegunungan Province, on 6 November 2023. One civilian was reportedly killed, and one injured during the attack.



[Read more](#)

Freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and association

Police arrest twenty Papuan activists during peaceful protest in Merauke



Police officers forcefully dispersed a peaceful demonstration in the Merauke Regency, Papua Selatan Province, on 18 December 2023. Twenty student activists were arbitrarily detained at the Merauke District Police Headquarters.

[Read more](#)

Makassar, Sulawesi Selatan Province, 1 Dec: Police obstruct students in front of Papuan student dormitory

On 1 December 2023, about 350 police officers prevented dozens of Papuan students from conducting a peaceful rally in the city of Makassar, Sulawesi Selatan Province. The AMP and FRI WP had registered the protest following national law.



[Read more](#)

Sorong, Papua Barat Daya Province, 1 Dec: Police officers disperse peaceful protest in Sorong with teargas



Police officers forcefully dispersed a peaceful protest officially registered by the Papuan Peoples Alliance (ARP). Protesters gathered on 1 December 2023 next to the Ramayana Mall in Klademak Village, Sorong City. At least one protester sustained bruises on the body after being hit by a teargas grenade

[Read more](#)

Ternate, Maluku Utara Province, 1 Dec: Authorities prevent peaceful protest and intimidate activists



In the city of Ternate, security force members obstructed a peaceful assembly and carried out acts of intimidation and harassment against activists of the Papuan Student Alliance (AMP) and the Indonesian People's Front for West Papua (FRI WP) on 1 December 2023.

[Read more](#)

Manokwari, Papua Barat Province, Human Rights

Day 10 Dec. – Police violence and arbitrary arrests

In Manokwari, a demonstration in commemoration of Human Rights Day on 10 December 2023 led to a confrontation between police and protestors in the Amban area. The police forcefully dispersed the protestors with tear gas and water cannons. At least three other protestors were injured due to police violence.



[Read more](#)



Timika, Papua Selatan Province, Human Rights Day 10 Dec. – Police violence and arbitrary arrests

In Timika, various member organisations of the Solidarity Movement Against Investment and Militarism in Papua, came together to commemorate the Human Rights Day on 10 December 2023. Police officers reportedly ill-treated protestors while dispersing the demonstration. [At least 37 protesters](#) – including women, children, and one infant – were arbitrarily detained.

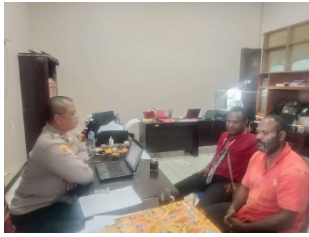
[Read more](#)

Arbitrary detention, intimidation and criminalisation

Military members arrest Papuan man in Yahukimo

The Indonesian Military (TNI) reportedly arrested Mr Neos Bahabol in Yahukimo Regency, Highland Papua Province, without a warrant or explaining the arrest. The arbitrary arrest took place at a sand company mill in the town of Dekai on 9 October 2023. [Read more](#)

Papuan man arbitrarily arrested in Manokwari, West Papua



On 16 October 2023, in Manokwari, Papua Barat Province, Mr Melianus Iba was arrested for allegedly carrying out a shooting at an Indonesian Army Post in Aroba District, Teluk Bintuni Regency, West Papua Province, on 24 September 2023.

[Read more](#)

KNPB faces police obstruction as it prepares for its 15th-anniversary celebration

Papuan activists were intimidated by police members while preparing for the anniversary of their organisation at the KNPB Mamberamo Tengah Secretariat on 17 November 2023. On 18 November 2023, KNPB members were again obstructed as they were marching while distributing leaflets.



[Read more](#)



KNPB again faces police obstruction in the Mamberamo Tengah Regency.

On 1 December 2023, KNPB activists were preparing banners to commemorate the “Papuan Independence Day” with a worship ceremony. Armed police officers under the command of the Deputy Chief of Police of Papua entered the secretariat. They removed an image of the Morning Star flag motif from the entrance door.

[Read more](#)

Other violations

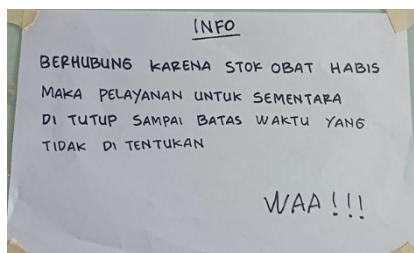
Land conflict between the indigenous community in Tambrau and company PT KKM implementing the Trans Papua Road Project



Indigenous communities in South Miyah District, Tambrau Regency are facing conflicts with companies involved in the Trans Papua Road Project. Disputes with customary rights owners have marred the project.

[Read more](#)

Public hospital and Puskesmas in Nduga indefinitely closed



The Nduga Regional General Hospital (RSUD) and the Kenyam Health Centre (Puskesmas) have ceased operations due to the non-payment of health workers' honorarium for five months, from July to November 2023. The dire situation has left the local community struggling to access medical treatment.

[Read more](#)

Maladministration results in lack of medication in Deiyai Regency

Human rights defenders have reported a lack of medication at the hospital in December 2023 due to maladministration. The hospital allegedly failed to coordinate the purchase of new drugs with the health department and the local parliament. The general hospital in Waghete is the only hospital in the Deiyai Regency.

[Read more](#)

About Human Rights Monitor

The Human Rights Monitor (HRM) is an independent, international non-profit project promoting human rights through documentation and advocacy. HRM is based in the European Union and active since 2022. We are achieving our vision by documenting violations; researching institutional, social and political contexts that affect rights protection and peace; and sharing the conclusions of evidence-based monitoring work.

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ⁱ The term West Papua, also sometimes referred to as Papua, Tanah Papua (Land of Papua) or Western New Guinea refers to the western half of the New Guinea islands and is recognized by the United Nations as part of Indonesia since 1969. It is comprised of the Indonesian administrative provinces Papua Province, Papua Barat Province, Papua Tengah Province, Papua Pegunungan Province, Papua Selatan Province, and Papua Barat Daya Province. The unresolved [conflict about the political status of West Papua](#) continues to cause violence and violations of human rights and indigenous people's rights.