

**PAPUANS
BEHIND BARS**



Papuans Behind Bars

QUARTERLY UPDATE

October–December 2024

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Cover: The defendants in the Kramongmongga case when they arrived at the Fakfak District Court, 25 March
2024. Source: Special.

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Summary

During this period Papuans Behind Bars recorded 57 political arrests of West Papuans, comprising at least 50 arbitrary arrests and six arbitrary detentions. In addition, seven people were reportedly tortured, three people were victims of extrajudicial killings, and three people were minors. Of the 57 cases, 40 people have been released, 12 others are still detained, with two of them allegedly missing.

This quarter also saw at least 11 detainees arrested in previous periods receive sentences from the courts; six of whom were arrested in 2023, five of whom were arrested in 2024. Five were convicted of knowing and not preventing a conspiracy to commit rebellion, two were convicted of endangering public security, two men were convicted of insulting the state emblem, and two were convicted of premeditated murder. Their sentences ranged from five months to 12 years in prison.

Background

On 20 October 2024, Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka – son of the outgoing President Joko Widodo – were inaugurated as President and Vice President of Indonesia after a landslide victory in February that year. Soon after that, Prabowo appointed a huge number of ministerial officials and other state agencies, including over 100 people, to accommodate his large coalition of supporting political parties. The new cabinet also saw a significant increase of people from military backgrounds in various ministries, triggering concerns among human rights and pro-democracy activists that Indonesia may be heading back to a military government. Prabowo's first priority agenda items included free school meals, food and energy resilience and creating a more connected extractive industry, known as 'down streaming'.¹

No special agenda to address the conflict in West Papua was announced, however he selected three Papuans to his cabinet, including the Minister of Human Rights. In November,

¹ Office of the State Cabinet of Indonesia, *Empat Fokus Utama Pemerintah: Ketahanan Pangan, Energi, Hilirisasi, dan Gizi Gratis*, 2 December 2024, available at <https://setkab.go.id/empat-fokus-utama-pemerintah-ketahanan-pangan-energi-hilirisasi-dan-gizi-gratis/>

President Prabowo visited Merauke, Papua Selatan Province, to oversee the food estate program, a massive agro-industrial plantation. At least one million hectares (out of three millions hectares nationally) of the project will be in Merauke.² Previously, as Minister of Defence, in 2020 Prabowo was assigned to lead the food estate project in Merauke.³ In November 2024, the Supreme Court rejected the appeal filed by indigenous Papuan Awyu people to revoke the permits of some of the oil palm companies operating in Boven Digoel Regency, Papua Selatan Province.

On 16 October around 3am Papua time, two people on a motorcycle threw molotov cocktails in front of the office of JUBI, a Papuan daily news outlet in Waena, Jayapura, hitting two cars. Jubi staff managed to immediately extinguish the fire. The action was recorded by JUBI's CCTV and has been reported to police. This was one of many incidents of intimidation and attacks against JUBI staff who have been critical of the government on West Papua issues through their work. On 23 January 2023, there was an explosion from a low explosive bomb three metres from the house of head of JUBI, Victor Mambor, in Jayapura. However, in March 2024, the Jayapura police force issued a 'stop investigation' letter, citing lack of evidence.⁴



Police lines around the scene of the Molotov cocktail explosion in front of Jubi's editorial office that damaged two cars. Photo: Jubi.id.

² Reuters, Indonesia's Prabowo visits Papua to check key food estate project, 3 November 2024, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/indonesias-prabowo-visits-papua-check-key-food-estate-project-2024-11-03/>

³ TAPOL & awasMIFEE!, The Military's Role in Food Estate Plans, 2 November 2022, available at <https://www.tapol.org/publications/militarys-role-food-estate-plans> and TAPOL & awasMIFEE!, Pandemic Power-Grabs: Who benefits from Food Estates in West Papua?, 29 April 2022, available at <https://www.tapol.org/publications/pandemic-power-grabs-who-benefits-food-estates-west-papua>

⁴ TAPOL, West Papua 2023 Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Assembly Full Report, 10 December 2024, p. 7-8, available at <https://www.tapol.org/publications/west-papua-2023-freedom-expression-and-freedom-assembly-full-report>

On 27 November, Indonesian people voted to elect their local governments at the provincial and sub-provincial level, including in the six provinces of West Papua. TAPOL and the Alliance of Democracy for Papua (*Aliansi Demokrasi untuk Papua*, ALDP) conducted limited monitoring in selected areas, targeting three provinces and 10 regencies. Initial findings discovered numerous flaws in the local elections from biased government officials and security forces, to the incitement of hatred based on religion and ethnicity by several candidates, to weak accountability of election officials. It was expected that many election disputes would be lodged with the Constitutional Court, questioning the election results in West Papua.

In December, the US Department of State publicly designated Alpius Hasim Madi for involvement in a gross violation of human rights; the extrajudicial killing of Papuan Pastor Yeremia Zambani in Hitadipa District, Intan Jaya Regency in September 2020.⁵ Pastor Zambani was found dead near his pig pen, 300 metres from his home, with bullet and stab wounds. According to various reports, tensions in the area had increased since mid-September 2020 after an Indonesian soldier was killed by unknown individuals. The Indonesian military claims that the West Papuan National Liberation Army (*Tentara Pembebasan Nasional Papua Barat*, TPNPB) is responsible for the soldier's death.⁶

Around 85 thousand Papuan internally displaced people took refuge in other areas, fleeing from areas of armed conflict between Indonesian security forces and armed pro-Papuan independence group, the TPNPB.⁷

On 1 October, during the 57th UN Human Rights Council Regular Session, the public court known as Permanent Peoples' Tribunal (PPT) on West Papua released its report confirming the allegation of systematic human rights violations, state repression, marginalization and discrimination against Papuan indigenous peoples, land grabbing, exploitation of natural resources and environmental destruction.⁸ The PPT on West Papua was held in London, UK on 27-29 June.⁹ The PPT presented testimonies from Papuan activists and former political prisoners, national and international human rights NGOs and activists. The theme of Papuan political prisoners was raised in a submission filed by TAPOL, a UK based NGO.¹⁰

⁵ The US Department of State, Accountability Actions to Counter Global Corruption and Human Rights, 9 December 2024, available at <https://2021-2025.state.gov/accountability-actions-to-counter-global-corruption-and-human-rights/>

⁶ TAPOL, Statement on the Killing of the Papuan Church Minister, 23 September 2020, available at <https://www.tapol.org/publications/tapol-statement-killing-papuan-church-minister>

⁷ Human Rights Monitor, the Papua Monitor Q4/2024 October – December 2024, available at <https://humanrightsmonitor.org/reports/papua-quarterly-report-q4-2024-contradictions-and-crackdowns-navigating-post-inauguration-politics/>

⁸ See <https://permanentpeoplestribunal.org/geneva-1rst-october-2024-presentation-of-the-ppt-judgement-on-west-papua/?lang=en>

⁹ See <https://permanentpeoplestribunal.org/london-27th-29th-june-2024-ppt-session-on-state-and-environmental-violence-in-west-papua/?lang=en>

¹⁰ TAPOL, Submission to the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal on West Papua (27-29 June 2024 in London, UK), June 2022, available at <https://tapol.org/media/73>

New Cases

There were 57 new cases between October and December 2024. Most of the new cases involved arbitrary mass arrests against protesters in two demonstration events in Nabire, Papua Tengah Province – where 15 people were arrested – and in Jayapura, Papua Province – where 16 people were arrested – on 15 November and 10 December respectively.

In late October, the new Minister of Transmigration, a former army general, announced his ministry would like to revive the transmigration program, bringing in non-Papuans to 10 areas of West Papua, reminiscent the same project under the New Order military regime (1966-1998).¹¹ In the New Order era, transmigration was one of the methods used to strengthen national security and defence, as it was assumed that moving settlements to new areas (inland or in the outermost regions) could make defence and security in these areas more guaranteed. Through transmigration, the non-Papuan population would become the majority, which would then help to diminish the Free Papua Movement (*Organisasi Papua Merdeka*, OPM). In the long run, transmigration could also create pressure on neighbouring Papua New Guinea.¹²

The Minister's statement immediately sparked concerns among indigenous Papuans who felt the return of this policy would depopulate and further marginalise indigenous Papuans in West Papua. They also believe that many national development projects in West Papua, such as food and energy estate or expansion of mining and oil palm plantations would invite non-Papuans as new workers to West Papua. Many groups, mostly led by Papuan students, organised demonstrations in some Indonesian cities to reject the transmigration plan.



West Papuan student demonstration against transmigration programme, Abepura, Jayapura City, Papua Province, 4 November 2024. Photo: Local human rights defender.

¹¹ BBC, *Pemerintahan Prabowo berencana hidupkan lagi transmigrasi ke Papua – Mengapa orang asli Papua cemas?*, 31 October 2024, available at <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/c74le8wel5zo>

¹² See Carmel Budiardjo and Liem Soei Liong, *West Papua: The Obliteration of a People*, third edition, London, TAPOL, 1988, p. 45–62.

In Nabire on 15 November, a coalition of Papuan activists, the **Papuan People's Front Against Transmigration (*Front Rakyat Papua Anti-Transmigrasi, FRPAT*)** organised peaceful protests in the city. At 8am local time, police officers began to disperse the crowd with teargas and water cannons. Some officers also fired shots. At least four protesters were injured during the crackdown and 15 protesters were arbitrarily detained at the Nabire District Police Station. The police forced them to sign statements to refrain from joining future political protests or other activities. All of them were released the same day, after their legal aid team, tribal chiefs, and the Central Papuan People's Council (*Majelis Rakyat Papua, Provinsi Papua Tengah, MRPPT*) negotiated with police.

On the same day, Jayapura police arrested three participants in a demonstration against transmigration in Jayapura. Three men, **Yanuarus Agapa, Alex You, and DD**, were arrested when police forcibly dispersed the demonstration. According to the report that we received, at least 162 people, consisting of students and supporters, were involved in the demo. They gathered at two points: the first near Lapangan Trikora; the second at Cenderawasih University (*Universitas Cenderawasih, Uncen*) campus in Abepura.

Demonstrators at the campus were blocked from the start. The demonstrators at Trikora Field moved to Abepura to join their friends there. But when they made it to Abepura Roundabout and gave speeches there, it wasn't long before police fired water cannons, tear gas and warning shots. As participants were scattered by the forced dispersal, the three men mentioned above were arrested. Based on our record, Yanuarus Agapa and Alex You are still in detention, while DD, who is aged 17, has been released on 29 November.

After a series of protests, mostly from Papuans, the Minister of Transmigration revised his statement saying he would only relocate people internally within West Papua.¹³

On 1 December in Yogyakarta, local police arrested **MM**, a Papuan activist and member of the Papuan Students Alliance (*Aliansi Mahasiswa Papua, AMP*) during the commemoration of the day considered by many Papuans as West Papua's Independence Day (declared on 1 December 1961). The demonstration was attended by around 188 Papuan and Indonesian students, before being obstructed and dispersed by police. Not accepting the dispersal, demonstrators became angry and clashed with police. MM was arrested for allegedly assaulting the police.

¹³ Antara, *Menteri Transmigrasi pastikan transmigrasi di Papua hanya lokal*, 6 December 2024, available at www.antaranews.com/berita/4517497/menteri-transmigrasi-pastikan-transmigrasi-di-papua-hanya-lokal



Former political prisoner Melvin Yobe performs a silent action while unfurling a banner 'Self-determination for West Papua', in front of a church in Abepura, Jayapura City, Papua Province, 1 December 2024, to commemorate West Papua's Independence Day. Photo: Local human rights defender.

Arrests of activists involved in the aforementioned commemorations also occurred in Jayapura, Papua Province, and Makassar, Sulawesi Selatan Province. In Jayapura, former political prisoner **Malvin Yobe** was arrested in front of the Catholic Church of the Good Shepherd (*Gereja Katolik Gembala Baik*), Abepura, on 1 December 2024. He was arrested for displaying a banner reading 'Self-determination for West Papua' and 'Independence is the right of all. After being arrested and interrogated, Malvin was released in the afternoon. In Makassar, **three people** were arrested by Makassar Police on 2 December 2024. One of them was a Makassar Legal Aid (*Lembaga Bantuan Hukum*, LBH Makassar) activist, while the other two were a solidarity activist for West Papua and a Papuan student. They were arrested during a riot between police and demonstrators as police blocked and dispersed the demonstration. The three were released from the police station later that evening.

Most of the 2024 commemorations in West Papua were not held in the public sphere, as Papuan activists felt there would be a repressive response by Indonesian security forces.¹⁴

Mass arrests were also carried out by police in Jayapura on 10 December against **16 Papuan students** all from the Walter Post School of Theology (STT) in Sentani, Jayapura. They were

¹⁴ Human Rights Monitor, 1st December commemorations in various locations across Indonesia responded by police repression, 13 January 2025, available at <https://humanrightsmonitor.org/news/1st-december-commemorations-in-various-locations-across-indonesia-responded-by-police-repression/>

arrested in Sentani, Jayapura Regency before being able to join the celebration of International Human Rights Day organised by Papuan church leaders under the Papuan Council of Churches (PCC) in Jayapura City. On that occasion, the PCC delivered prayers and lamentations for the resolution of the problems of human rights violations, environmental damage, internally displaced persons, and land grabbing related to national strategic projects. The police claimed that the arrests were necessary to prevent public disorder. After being detained for a few hours at Jayapura District Police station, they were all released around midday after a legal aid lawyer came to the police station to challenge the arrests.

Ongoing Case Updates

The most high profile case was the murder of Kramongmongga District Chief, Darson Hegemur, and the burning of the District Office and a school building on 15 August 2023 in Fakfak District, Papua Barat Province.¹⁵ As reported in the previous quarter, the public prosecutor appealed the decisions of the judges against seven defendants whose sentences were considered too low, and one who had been acquitted. The prosecutors asked the panel of judges at the appeal level to overturn the previous court's decision, requesting that the sentences for the defendants be in line with the prosecutors' demands at the court of first instance, the Fakfak District Court.



The defendants in the Kramongmongga case arrive at the Fakfak District Court for trial, 25 March 2025. Photo: Special.

On 7 October, the judges of the Court of Appeal at the West Papua High Court issued their verdicts on the case. In their decisions, the judges increased the prison terms of **Alex Kramandondo alias Tete Peh, Yohanes Kramandondo, Hariyanto Iba, Vridolin Kraman-**

¹⁵ Papuans Behind Bars Annual Overview 2023, p. 14 & 15, available at <https://papuansbehindbars.org/annual-overview-2023/>

dondo, and **Alexander Kramandondo**, from 15 months' to 18 months' imprisonment. There was no change in the sentence for **Ferdinandus Kramandondo**, who was sentenced to 7 years in prison. Most importantly, the judges at the Court of Appeal did not change the criminal article used by the judges at the First Level at the Fakfak District Court, in other words, the defendants were not proven to be involved in the premeditated murder of the Kramongmongga District Chief.

Table 1. List of prison sentences for prisoners in the Kramongmongga case*

No.	Name	Verdict of Fakfak District Court	Verdict of Papua Barat High Court	Verdict of Supreme Court
1	Antonius Sikin Kramandondo	free of all charges	-	free of all charges
2	Alex Kramandondo alias Tete Peh	1 year 3 months	1 year 6 months	on trial
3	Yohanes Kramandondo	1 year 2 months	1 year 6 months	on trial
4	Hariyanto Iba	1 year 3 months	1 year 6 months	on trial
5	Vridolin Petrus Kramandondo	1 year 3 months	1 year 6 months	on trial
6	Ferdinandus Kramandondo	7 years	7 years	on trial
7	Alexander Kramandondo	1 year 3 months	1 year 6 months	on trial

* Information as of 31 December 2024.

Based on the decisions of the Panel of Appeal Judges, the prosecutor filed another appeal to the Supreme Court. Until the end of December 2024, this case was still being processed and the Supreme Court Cassation Judges had not yet made a decision.

On 22 October, judges at Wamena District Court found **Anius Payage** and **Yoel Heluka** guilty. Anius was sentenced to 12 years in prison while Yoel was sentenced to 10 years in prison. Members of the Peace Cartenz Operation (*Satgas Damai Cartenz*) arrested Yoel Heluka and Anius Payage in Kali Wo, Yahukimo, 11 April 2024. They were both allegedly involved in the murder of migrant gold panners in Kali Ei, Seradala District, Yahukimo, 16 October 2023. Police also shot dead Afrika Heluka and Toni Wetapo, for allegedly resisting arrest.

On 24 October, judges at Nabire District Court found **Junius Waker** guilty of arson and sentenced him to 4 years in prison, one year lower than the public prosecutor's demand. Junius was arrested by members of the Peace Cartenz Operation in Tembagapura, Mimika Regency, on 19 May 2024. He was allegedly involved in a number of shootings from 2017 to 2020. On 26 July 2024, the case was registered at Nabire District Court. The case that was finally charged was the burning of the Unggul Mitra Pratama Ltd Interindo camp, which occurred on 11 February 2021.

On 4 December 2024, judges at Nabire District Court found **Marten Dogomo** and **Apedus Tebai** guilty of violating the article on destruction of property and sentenced them to 5 months in prison, in accordance with the prosecutor's demands. They were both arrested on 15 August 2024 following a National Committee for West Papua (*Komite Nasional Papua*

Barat, KNPB) demonstration in Nabire that ended in chaos when it was dispersed by police. In addition to using excessive force during the dispersal, during the demonstration commemorating the 1962 New York Agreement police also arrested 99 demonstrators, five of whom were detained and later named as suspects, two of which were Marten and Apedus.

Issues of Concern

During this period, we also documented other serious human rights violations against Papuan political prisoners, including the use of excessive force during the policing of demonstrations, torture and ill-treatment, unlawful killings and enforced disappearance. On 9 October military personnel from Infantry Battalion 509 (*Batalyon Infanteri 509*, Yonif 509/BY) 509 arrested **Alex Sondegau** on suspicion of being a member of an armed group in Intan Jaya, Papua Pegunungan Province.



Alex Sondegau was arrested near the Yonif 509/BY Preparation Command Post in Mamba Village, Sugapa District, Intan Jaya. The TPNPB spokesperson claimed that Alex was a civilian, not a TPNPB member, and was mentally ill. According to him, Alex had studied in Semarang, Central Java, but did not finish because he suffered from mental illness and was sent back to Papua. By the end of 2024, there was no further news regarding Alex's legal proceedings. There were even allegations that Alex had been forcibly disappeared and/or murdered. On 18 October, several videos were circulated showing his family searching for his body.¹⁶

Alex Sondegau when arrested by military personnel in Mamba Village, Intan Jaya Regency, Papua Tengah Province, 9 October 2024. Photo: Human Rights Monitor.

On 12 October, Yonif 509/BY personnel reportedly arrested and tortured **two high school students** around the Mamba Military Post in Intan Jaya. Soldiers allegedly tortured the two young men to obtain information about the TPNPB. The two young men were doused in cooking oil and threatened with being burned alive. The following day, one of the students was reportedly released while his friend was still missing.¹⁷

On 13 October, Yonif 509/BY personnel reportedly arrested two youths at a military post in Mamba, Intan Jaya. The first youth, **SB**, aged 15, was arrested while on his way home with **Pianus Sani**, aged 18. SB was taken to a military post and allegedly tortured inside. This was visible from the wounds all over his body, allegedly from being beaten by the soldiers.

¹⁶ Human Rights Monitor, Human Rights News, 30 October 2024, available at <https://humanrightsmonitor.org/news/yonif-509-balawara-yudha-military-members-accused-of-torture-and-extra-judicial-killings-in-intan-jaya/>

¹⁷ Ibid.

A local religious leader went to the post to free him. However, the soldiers requested that Pianus Sani, whom they hadn't initially managed to detain, be brought to the post. Some villagers managed to get Sani to agree to come to the army post. SB was released, however Pianus Sani was then detained. After the family left the post, army personnel allegedly tortured Sani inside the post until he died. His body was found by villagers the next day on the side of the road.¹⁸

On 8 December, military personnel from Yonif 509/BY reportedly arbitrarily arrested and tortured to death a minor in Mamba Village, Sugapa District, Intan Jaya. **Yulianus Abugau and his two friends** were near Mamba Village when their motorcycle ran out of fuel around 10 am. While his friends pushed the motorbike, Yulianus walked ahead to Mamba to procure fuel but was intercepted by Yonif 509/BY members near the Yonif 509/BY military post. It is believed that the soldiers dragged Yulianus into the forest behind the military post, where they tortured and fatally stabbed him with a bayonet. Relatives later found the body in the tall grass, not far from the post. They believe the military killed Yulianus because they suspected him of being part of an armed group.¹⁹

In mid-November, the Nabire Police Force reportedly used excessive force during the anti-transmigration protest in Nabire. They fired tear gas and bullets against FRPAT protesters at four gathering points. They also confiscated a number of items including a car, generator, megaphone, motorbikes, speakers, mobile phones and a camera. At least four people were injured by the tear gas. Residents at the nearby mass gathering complained that police forces also fired teargas grenades at residential houses.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Human Rights Monitor, Military members allegedly kill 16-year-old Papuan in Intan Jaya, 13 December 2024, available at <https://humanrightsmonitor.org/case/military-members-allegedly-kill-16-year-old-papuan-in-intan-jaya/>

Papuans Behind Bars aims to provide accurate and transparent data, published in English and Indonesian, to facilitate direct support for prisoners and promote wider debate and campaigning in support of free expression in West Papua.

Papuans Behind Bars is a collective effort initiated by Papuan civil society groups working together as the Civil Society Coalition to Uphold Law and Human Rights in Papua. It is a grassroots initiative and represents a broad collaboration between lawyers, human rights groups, adat groups, activists, journalists and individuals in West Papua, as well as Jakarta-based NGOs and international solidarity groups.

Questions, comments and corrections are welcomed, and you can write to us at info@papuansbehindbars.org

Visit papuansbehindbars.org for the latest information on West Papuan political prisoners.

