

Free West Papua

Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group

14 November 2019

In response to small but co-ordinated West Papuan demonstrations across the country in the middle of August this year, Right wing forces engaged in a provocation against Papuan students in the Indonesian city of Surabaya. When the Papuans responded, these Right wing forces accused the students of disrespecting the Indonesian flag and stormed the students' dormitory, attacking them and engaging in racial slurs.

When the stories of this assault spread, the cities of West Papua erupted in rage. In Manokwari, Jayapura and Sorong, government buildings were stormed and some torched. In these and many other places, the Morning Star flag was raised. A protest against anti-Melanesian racism became centred on the Papuans' core demand of independence.

The Indonesian Government was initially taken aback by the protests, particularly as they arose in reaction to an instance of egregious racism. The raising of the Morning Star, however, was a challenge that could not be left without a response. Many protestors were shot, the military was greatly reinforced in West Papua and access to the Internet was shut down. Dozens of people were murdered by security forces. Demonstrations died down after about a month, but the issues remain.

Fundamentally, it is colonialism causing the problems in West Papua. The Indonesian State, centred on the Javanese ruling elites, doesn't recognise the right of West Papua's people to self-determination and instead insists on a unitary Indonesian national identity. From the original take-over in 1962, through the "Act of Free Choice" conducted at gunpoint in 1969 and the decades of heavy military repression under Suharto's New Order regime until the 1990s, the Papuans have been oppressed and their lands have been confiscated to make way for migrants from Java and other Indonesian islands. Indonesia's Basic Forestry Act of 1967 states that "the rights of traditional law communities may not be allowed to stand in the way of transmigration sites".

As Anarchists, we are opposed to all forms of nationalism. Instead, we demand workers' revolution, but this does not translate into a simple opposition to the West Papuans' demand for independence. This would be to side with the nationalism of the chauvinist Indonesian State. Rather, we oppose all forms of national oppression, regardless of where the capitalists draw their national boundaries. We are happy to let the location of these boundaries be set by simple democratic methods. If the West Papuan people want independence, they are entitled to it – and they will learn that their own capitalist class is capable of being just as violent and corrupt as the Indonesian one.

The Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group therefore demands that the Indonesian military be withdrawn from West Papua to stop the immediate abuses and that transmigration to West Papua be ceased to prevent the underlying dispossession getting worse. We recognise the right of the West Papuan people to self-determination and we call on the working class in both Australia and Indonesia to join us in this. It is particularly important for the working class movement in Indonesia to recognise the West Papuans' right of self-determination, because this is the only way in which the question can be resolved peacefully. The other road is armed struggle, with the backing of Australian imperialism – something that would result in a sham independence and condemn the Papuans to semi-colonial servitude for the benefit of Australian mining companies. Only the working class can free West Papua.

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SELF DETERMINATION FOR WEST PAPUA!

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