



6.9.2011

## INDONESIA CSW urges release of West Papuan political prisoner Filep Karma and beginning of dialog with Papuan representatives

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Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) today called on the Government of Indonesia to release the West Papuan political prisoner Filep Karma, and respond to the proposal made by Papuan people for a dialogue process, with international mediation, to resolve the serious human rights, humanitarian, political, social and economic problems in West Papua.

A CSW delegation returned from a three-week visit to Indonesia last week, which included three days in West Papua. CSW requested permission to visit Filep Karma in Abepura prison, but access was refused. Mr. Karma, 51, has been in jail since 2004, after he raised the West Papuan flag known as the 'Morning Star', a symbol of independence. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

According to sources close to Mr. Karma who spoke to CSW, he is in poor health due to lack of nutrition, and his body weight is reported to have fallen from 69kg to below 50 kg. He is reportedly banned from writing, and is denied radio, books or access to international media. He has not been provided with a mattress, and so sleeps on the cement floor, causing him cold and back pain. The prison authorities have reportedly not provided food since 3 December, 2010, so he relies on food supplies provided by family members and other visitors. CSW was denied access to the prison, so is unable to verify these reports, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was expelled from West Papua in 2009.

CSW met Filep Karma's daughters Audryne, 23, and Andrefina, 22 in Jakarta. Audryne Karma told CSW, "I want to say to the international community: please help us, please voice our father's struggle. We suffer a lot."

During the three-day visit to West Papua, CSW also met prominent church leaders and human rights activists, and heard evidence of the continuing humanitarian and political crisis in West Papua. It is clear that Papuan people believe the "special autonomy" package introduced in 2002 has failed, and has not resulted in any meaningful improvement for the people of West Papua. "Special autonomy has failed, and there is now a need to have a thorough evaluation and to obtain Jakarta's response to Papuans' demand for dialogue," one church leader told CSW.

Migration from other parts of Indonesia is having a serious demographic impact, with migrants perceived as taking the best business and employment opportunities and indigenous Papuans facing discrimination in access to health care, education, trade and jobs. Concerns were also expressed that a religious dimension is emerging, with the growth in the Muslim community as a result of migration having an effect on the predominantly Christian Papuan population. Some sources warned that if these factors are not addressed, inter-religious tensions will grow and a conflict could develop. "The marginalization of indigenous Papuans has the potential for conflict, and it is no longer just a conflict with the state, but also with elements in society," one church leader said.

"The best solution is a genuine, high-level, peaceful dialogue between the Indonesian government and Papuan representatives, without preconditions, mediated by the international community," said a senior church leader. "Now is the time to stop playing games and sit together round the table."

In Jakarta, CSW met advisers to the Vice-President of Indonesia to discuss West Papua, and urged the Government of Indonesia to take steps to respect human rights, release political prisoners, and engage in a genuine dialogue.

CSW's Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, "Our team spoke to a wide range of representatives of the Papuan people, and the unanimous message was that indigenous Papuan people are severely marginalized, becoming an ethnic and religious minority in their own land. Some even talk of a slow genocide occurring. It is in Indonesia's own interests that the voice of the Papuan people is heard. If grievances are ignored and the suppression of the Papuan people continues, the consequences could be very grave for all concerned. It is therefore vital that Indonesia work with the Papuan people and the international community to establish a dialogue to identify the core issues and seek a common solution. The first step to signal a new direction would be for Indonesia to release Filep Karma."