



UNITED LIBERATION MOVEMENT FOR WEST PAPUA

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ULMWP Statement on the Republic of Vanuatu's Independence Day, July 30th, 2018

On behalf of the West Papuan people, the ULMWP would like to wish our brothers and sisters across Vanuatu a very happy independence day.

As we celebrate with you, your 38 years of full independence, our hearts are also filled with hope and inspiration for our own struggle to sovereignty.

7 months ago on the 1st of December, the ULMWP were also in Port Vila, proudly celebrating the opening of our first international office. This was a deeply significant moment for us, as a culmination of the long-standing solidarity of the Vanuatu people with our own struggle- and a symbolic step towards our own statehood.

December the 1st is a deeply emotional day for West Papuans, as we mark our own original day of independence from the Dutch in 1961, before our brutal colonisation by Indonesia. We were to be the first amongst our Melanesian brothers and sisters to be truly independent, with the opening of West Papua's national parliament, the Morning Star flag raised and our national anthem played for the first time. Today, 57 years later, and the story could not be more different. Simply marking this day in our history puts West Papuans at risk of arrest, imprisonment and violence.

So, as we watch your celebrations here, we also remember with great affection father Walter Lini, who not only inspired his own people but believed so much in the freedom of all Melanesians.

'We will not be free until all Melanesians are free'

As Melanesians, we are family. We have shared the same history, borne witness to each other's suffering and walked side by side on the same journey towards freedom.

As we think of father Lini's famous words, we can be certain that he would be proud of this great nation in continuing to uphold these beliefs and ideals. The people of West Papua are grateful to the people and the government of Vanuatu who, continue to champion our right to self-determination and lead the call for our freedom from colonialism.

From our office in Port Vila, to the streets and homes of West Papua, we will be celebrating with you in honour of your great nation.

We know that with our Melanesian brothers and sisters at our side, we will soon see our own dream of freedom become a reality. Then we will be able to demonstrate to you all how much this solidarity has really meant.

May God bless Vanuatu and may God bless Melanesia.