



◀ Papuan refugee children in Wamena.
Photo: Team of Humanitarian Volunteers for Nduga

THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN WEST PAPUA

**Internal conflict, the displacement of people,
and the coronavirus pandemic**

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The humanitarian crisis in West Papua: internal conflict, the displacement of people, and the coronavirus pandemic

SUMMARY

Numerous cases of internal displacement due to security force operations in West Papua were reported from the regencies of Mimika, Intan Jaya, Puncak, Lanny Jaya, and Nduga between 2019 and April 2020. These operations against the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPN PB) began on 4 December 2018 in Nduga in response to the killing of 19 government contractors and resulted in further armed clashes. Data collected by the ICP show that more than 41,851 indigenous Papuans from these five regencies were internally displaced between 2019 and April 2020. In 2019, 214 of these Papuans reportedly died as a result of sickness, malnutrition, exhaustion, and hypothermia. The COVID-19 outbreak in the region has aggravated this humanitarian crisis. The authorities in West Papua are now expected to impose even greater restrictions on the freedom of movement and freedom of assembly, and it is likely that hospitals, which already lag far behind national care standards, and medical personnel will not be able to cope with the rising number of patients.

Internal conflict, displacement of people, and the COVID-19 pandemic

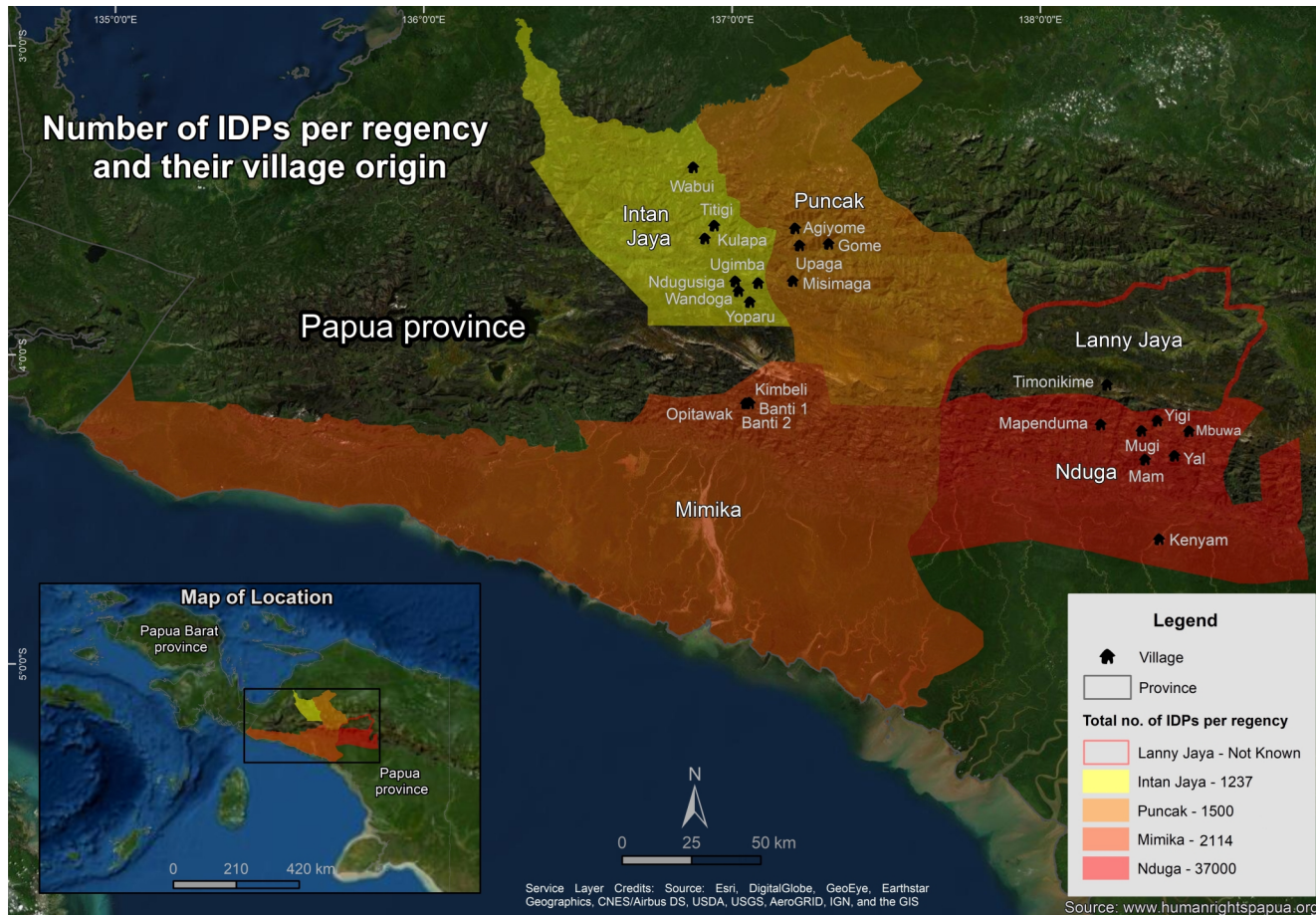
Since the killing of 19 government contractors in the regency of Nduga on 2 December 2018, the Government of Indonesia has deployed additional troops in various Papuan regencies of the central highlands in an attempt to prosecute the perpetrators and as a demonstration of military strength against the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPN PB). The central highlands, which are largely isolated from public services, are known to be the stronghold of the TPN PB. The area is mainly populated by Indigenous Papuans, except for a few small towns where migrants maintain small businesses or work in government positions.

| Regency | No IDPs |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Nduga | More than 37,000 |
| Mimika | 2,114 |
| Intan Jaya | 1,237 |
| Puncak | More than 1,500 |
| Total estimated | More than 41,851 |

The Indonesian government's approach to managing the conflict through police and military intervention has had far-reaching consequences for the indigenous peoples in the central highlands as it has perpetuated the cycle of violence in the affected areas. Security force operations against the TPN PB have often triggered further armed clashes and the deployment of non-organic troops from other regions in Indonesia. These troops are unfamiliar with the customs and culture of indigenous peoples in West Papua. Accordingly, security force raids in indigenous villages are often accompanied by human rights violations and internal displacement of the indigenous population. Houses are often demolished or burnt to the ground.

The number of civilian fatalities due to armed conflict in West Papua has increased significantly from 3 in 2017 to 62 in 2018. In 2019, the total number of civilians killed as a result of armed conflict rose to a new

record high of 229. Of these, 214 reportedly died as a result of sickness, malnutrition, exhaustion, and hypothermia during internal displacement. Since the beginning of 2020, at least seven civilians have allegedly been killed by security force members during such operations. Others were subjected to torture after security force members suspected them of being associated with the TPN PB. All reported victims of torture and killings throughout 2020 were indigenous Papuans.



The data collected by the ICP show that more than 41,851 indigenous Papuans from the regencies of Mimika, Intan Jaya, Puncak, Lanny Jaya, and Nduga were internally displaced between 4 December 2018 and early March 2020 because of security force operations. In some of the affected regencies, the IDPs received temporary aid from civil solidarity movements or/and government agencies. A large number of IDPs have been left to themselves and feel neglected by the Indonesian government. They are trapped in multiple Papuan cities where they live in church facilities, temporary shelters, or with relatives. The central government continues to deploy additional military forces to manage the conflict in the provinces of Papua and Papua Barat, which has had far-reaching consequences for the indigenous population in West Papua. Although this approach to conflict has led to a significant increase in IDPs since early 2019, the Indonesian government has failed to take responsibility for the growing number of IDPs and set up refugee camps under the supervision of the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI), as demanded by several local civil society organisations.

Despite the existing legal foundation for the provision of humanitarian services during periods of social conflict and natural disasters, the central government has not taken any meaningful steps to allow humanitarian access to IDPs in West Papua. Indonesian Law No. 1/2018 on the Red Cross requires the

PMI to assist displaced persons in times of peace and conflict in accordance with the principles of humanity, equality, neutrality, independence, volunteerism, and universality. It is common for the police and military to downplay human rights violations and the displacement of indigenous Papuans by making false statements to manipulate public opinion. Their representatives have stated in interviews with the national media that the people fled their villages in fear of armed TPN PB groups. An attempt was made to cover up several extra-judicial killings throughout 2020 by publicly claiming that those killed were TPN PB members.

Humanitarian access to IDPs in West Papua is urgently required, especially given that the first cases of COVID-19 in the province of Papua were confirmed in March 2020. A population living in an area affected by armed conflict, weakened by fighting, destruction, and displacement, is particularly vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19. The living conditions of IDPs, either in crowded shelters or in their relatives' homes, is likely to facilitate rapid transmission of the coronavirus. Moreover, the medical infrastructure, already deficient prior to the arrival of IDPs, is likely to be quickly overwhelmed. The pandemic will further restrict access to essential services and humanitarian aid.

FORCED INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

Between 2019 and April 2020, cases of internal displacement in West Papua were reported from the regencies of Mimika, Intan Jaya, Puncak, Lanny Jaya, and Nduga. The displacement of Papuan villagers was caused by the deployment of an even greater number of security forces to the region and must therefore be understood in the context of the long-standing political conflict in West Papua.

1. IDPs in Mimika Regency



A large group of IDPs from four villages reach a Freeport facility in Tembagapura in Mimika regency

The armed conflict in the regency of Mimika escalated in early March 2020. The police and the military deployed additional troops to the Tembagapura district after TPN PB forces killed a police officer in the village of Arwanop on 29 February 2020. Subsequent armed clashes between TPN PB and Joint Security Forces (TNI Polri) in multiple locations resulted in the destruction of infrastructure and fatalities on both sides. As of 15 April 2020, three civilians have reportedly been killed in Mimika since the operation was launched.

Observers have stated that 2,114 indigenous

Amungme people from the villages of Banti 1, Banti 2, Opitawak, and Kimbeli fled to the town of Tembagapura on 6 March 2020. On 9 March 2020, buses serving the mining company PT Freeport Indonesia brought 917 IDPs to the city of Timika, where they stayed with relatives or sought shelter



IDPs in the company of a group of armed police officers near Tembagapura

in churches. On 8 March 2020, observers counted 614 IDPs who had travelled from Tembagapura to Timika. The regency government records around 1,700 refugees, while figures documented by civil society actors mention a total of 2,114 IDPs, who were taken to Timika on several evacuation waves on March 2 - 8, 2019.

The Papuan Police Chief, Paulus Waterpauw, claimed in an interview with national media outlets that the villagers fled their homes because they feared violent acts by armed criminal groups.

2. IDPs in Intan Jaya Regency

A military operation has been taking place in the regency of Intan Jaya after TPN PB fighters killed two military members during an armed attack on 17 December 2019. Since the beginning of the operation, three indigenous Papuans have reportedly been killed by security force members during armed attacks in the Sugapa district, among whom was an eleven-year-old boy. The XVII Cenderawasih Military Commander, Colonel Eko Daryanto, later claimed in an interview that his men opened fire at the boy because he was allegedly carrying a firearm. In addition, two minors and two adult Papuans were injured by bullets fired by the security forces.

According to the Justice, Peace, and Integrity of the Creation Desk of the Papuan Tabernacle Church (JPIC Kingmi Papua), at least 15 villages in the districts of Sugapa, Ugimba and Hitadipa were affected by the military operation, which caused indigenous residents to flee their homes. Figures suggest that 1,237 indigenous peoples were internally displaced – 331 of whom were women and children. The IDPs sought shelter in a catholic church in Sugapa. Others fled to the regencies of Nabire and Mimika.



Military helicopters bringing additional troops to Sokopaki airport, Intan Jaya

3. IDPs in Puncak Regency

A security force operation in the Gome district of the highland regency of Puncak resulted in the internal displacement of over 1,500 indigenous peoples from eight villages, most of whom were women and children. Between 24 and 26 August 2019, joint security forces conducted raids in multiple villages to arrest two high-ranking TPN PB commanders. According to local informants, approximately 20 houses in Tegelobak were damaged or burnt to the ground. During the operation, two indigenous villagers were reportedly killed. On 17 September 2019, joint security forces allegedly shot dead an indigenous villager and two children in the village of Olencki. Four indigenous women were also injured by bullets during the incident.

1. The Indonesian police and military often refer to TPN PB groups as 'armed criminal groups', usually abbreviated as KKB (Kelompok Kriminal Bersenjata). The term reflects the government's position that the TPN PB is a criminal organisation. It does not acknowledge the TPN PB's political agenda and its struggle for political self-determination.

While some villagers sought temporary shelter in the surrounding forests and neighbouring districts, approximately 1,500 IDPs fled to the village of Yenggernok, where they were accommodated in tents in front of the Gome Presbyterial Office of the KINGMI Papua Church. Volunteers from Yenggernok stated they did not have enough food for the IDPs. Food supplies donated by the Gome Sub-district police, the local health centre (Puskesmas), the Women Empowerment Agency, and the Social Affairs Agency in Puncak had diminished by 5 September 2020, at a time when the armed clashes in Gome were still ongoing. Two indigenous villagers reportedly died in August 2020 after being displaced from their villages.

4. IDPs in Lanny Jaya Regency

The Papuan Institute of Human Rights Studies and Advocacy (ELSHAM Papua) documented a further military raid in the Balingga District of Lanny Jaya Regency, Papua Province. The raid occurred in response to an exchange of fire between the Indonesian Infantry (TNI-AD) and TPN-PB forces in the village of Timonikime on 1 December 2019 as military members implemented a social aid program. The TNI-AD subsequently launched several attacks against the TPN-PB near Timonikime on 2 and 4 December 2019. The military reportedly searched multiple houses in Timonikime. Seven homes were allegedly burnt to the ground and two indigenous villagers killed during this raid.

Indigenous Papuans from the villages of Timonikime and Manggalome reportedly fled to the surrounding forests in fear of repressive acts by members of the military. The total number of IDPs resulting from the incident is unknown. The local government evacuated non-Papuan motorcycle taxi drivers and teachers from the districts of Malagai, Balingga, Popome, and Pirime to the town of Tiom.



Indonesian military forces during a security operation in Lanny Jaya.

5. Update on the situation for IDPs from Nduga Regency

The security force operation in the regency of Nduga has been ongoing since 4 December 2018. The Foundation for Justice and Integrity of the Papuan People (YKKMP) documented 182 civilian fatalities between 4 December 2018 and July 2019, consisting of 21 adult females, 69 adult males, 21 female minors, 20 male minors, 14 female toddlers (below the age of 5 years), 12 male toddlers, and 17 female and 25 male babies – all indigenous Papuans. The figures have since risen to a total of 243 fatalities as of 27 December 2019. The



Emergency temporary school in Wamena for IDPs from Nduga

majority died as a result of exhaustion, sickness, and hypothermia. Security force members have allegedly killed twenty-two victims while seventeen government contractors have been executed by the TPN-PB. The most recent incident of extra-judicial killing and torture of indigenous residents occurred on 24 February 2020 in the town of Kenyam. YKKMP has shared the results of its investigation with multiple government agencies, including the President's office in January 2020. None of these agencies have taken any measures to investigate the human rights violations or provide humanitarian aid to the IDPs.

A voluntary humanitarian aid team estimated that over 37,000 IDPs originating from 16 districts in Nduga have been internally displaced as a result of the armed conflict. In August 2019, the Papuan Ombudsman Office visited refugees from Nduga in Wamena. The Ombudsman estimated that 50,000 people have been displaced – a figure that has not yet been verified. The armed conflict in Nduga Regency has been ongoing for more than 16 months, preventing indigenous IDPs from returning to their villages. Schools, healthcare centres (Puskesmas), and churches in Nduga are now deserted as health workers and teachers have not returned to their assigned places of work.

In July 2019, the Social Ministry Department prepared aid deliveries with a total value of €44,079 (IDR 740,449,000) for IDPs from Nduga. The deliveries contained 50 tonnes of rice, toys, school supplies, sports supplies, and supplies for vulnerable groups. Representatives of the Indonesian Ministry for Social Affairs (Kementerian Sosial RI) came to the town of Wamena to coordinate the distribution of the humanitarian goods. On 29 July 2019, a meeting between representatives of the local government, the social ministry, and the military was held at the KODIM 1702 military base. However, the IDPs rejected the humanitarian goods because the social ministry insisted on distributing the products through the military, whom the IDPs regard as 'enemies'. Their culture forbids them from receiving help from an enemy party. Consequently, the humanitarian goods were never distributed.

The local government in Nduga has provided IDPs in the districts of Mbua, Dal, and Yal with basic foods such as rice, instant noodles, cooking oil, sugar, and salt. IDPs in the regencies of Jayawijaya and Lanny Jaya have reportedly received occasional visits by the health department of Papua Province to provide health services. The majority of IDPs from Nduga have not received any humanitarian aid supplies from the government - they feel forgotten and neglected.

The central government has failed to set up a refugee camp in coordination with local governments in IDP hotspots like Wamena. Such camps could help to coordinate the distribution of aid deliveries and coordinate the effective provision of humanitarian services such as shelter, basic healthcare, and education. Many IDPs - particularly children – have been traumatised by the security force operations and fear the presence of police and military members in their villages.

COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN WEST PAPUA

The Indonesian government, like most governments around the globe, has taken numerous measures to

2 Ombudsman Republik Indonesia (22.08.2019): Temui Pengungsi Nduga, Ombudsman RI Temukan Fakta Ini, available at:

<https://ombudsman.go.id/news/r/temui-pengungsi-nduga-ombudsman-ri-temukan-fakta-ini>

3. CNN Indonesia (22.7.2019): Bantah Ada Pengungsi Tewas, Kemensos Kirim Bantuan ke Nduga, available at

<https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20190722084743-20-414248/bantah-ada-pengungsi-tewas-kemensos-kirim-bantuan-ke-nduga>

respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although these measures should be used to pursue legitimate public health objectives rather than target particular groups, it is expected that the authorities in West Papua will further restrict the freedom of movement and assembly. A significant question to address is whether the hospitals and medical personnel will be able to cope with the rising number of patients. Human rights activists and observers have stated that the hospitals in West Papua, even those in large cities, lag far behind in terms of national health care standards.

On 13 April 2020, the government categorised COVID-19 as a non-natural disaster and declared a state of emergency in Indonesia. The number of confirmed cases has continued to increase significantly since the first two cases were announced in March 2020. As of 30 June 2020, 56,385 cases have been confirmed in Indonesia with 2,876 deaths and 24,806 recoveries recorded so far.

As of 26 March 2020, local hospitals had identified only seven cases of COVID-19 in Papua province; however, the number of infections has quickly risen and has since spread to at least ten regencies. As of 30 June, there have been 1750 confirmed cases and 15 deaths in Papua province. The majority of cases occurred in Jayapura and Mimika Regency, where a high number of IDPs are also located. The provincial government in Papua has reacted to the rising number of infections by further extending the expanded and tightened social restrictions (PSDD) until 3 July 2020. Papua is ranked eighth in terms of the overall number of COVID-19 cases in Indonesia as of 30 June 2020.

In Papua province, the regency of Mimika with its capital Timika and the Freeport mine are the most heavily affected areas. The ICP reported on 7 May that despite 85 Freeport employees testing positive for COVID-19, the Grasberg Mine continued to operate at full capacity. COVID-19 infections reached 150 cases as of 17 May, including 102 in the district of Tembagapura where many IDPs are seeking refuge and where the living quarters of Freeport workers and their families are located. This has led Freeport to cut its workforce and operate the mine with an essential team only.

In Papua Barat, 239 positive cases have been reported as of 30 June 2020, most of which have been concentrated in the Regencies of Sorong, Raja Ampat, Teluk Bintuni, and Manokwari, and the city of Sorong. A total of four people have died due to the virus.

The enforcement of measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in violence against West Papuans. On 26 May, a 35-year-old man, Justinus Silas Dimara, died in Jayapura shortly after the police dispersed a group of residents with a water cannon. Like all the other men, he ran



Deputy Governor of Papua province and regional representatives. Photo: www.papua.go.id".

4. <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5059274/kasus-corona-masih-tinggi-papua-perpanjang-psdd-hingga-3-juli>

5. <https://covid19.kemkes.go.id/situasi-infeksi-emerging/info-corona-virus/situasi-terkini-perkembangan-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-1-juli-2020/#.XvxZP0FCQ2w>

away but fell heavily to the ground as he was hit by the powerful water jet. He died from the injuries he sustained. On 10 June 2020, joint security force members ill-treated 29-year-old Sarah Yeimo at a roadblock in the Wouye Butu village, Paniai Timur district, Paniai regency. They later tortured Yosia Magai (aged 24) and Yupen Magai (aged 28) in relation to the same incident. All three victims sustained injuries and had to be hospitalised. The control post with a roadblock had been set up by the local government to prevent people living outside of Paniai from entering the regency.

Recommendations

The ICP and its members call for the Government of Indonesia to:

- Allow international humanitarian organisations to access West Papua
- Allow access to international observers and foreign journalists so that they can freely report on the human rights situation in West Papua
- Withdraw non-organic troops from the regencies of Nduga, Mimika, and Intan Jaya to allow IDPs from these areas to return to their villages
- Instruct relevant government agencies at provincial and regional levels in the province of Papua to provide basic health care, education, and social services to IDPs until they can return to their homes.