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The Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**FALEOMAVAEGA HOLDS FIRST EVER HEARING
REGARDING INDONESIA'S DELIBERATE AND
SYSTEMATIC ABUSES IN WEST PAPUA**

On September 22, 2010, the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment, Rep. Eni F.H. Faleomavaega (D-AS), held a hearing entitled "Crimes Against Humanity: When Will Indonesia's Military Be Held Accountable for Deliberate and Systematic Abuses in West Papua?" This was the first hearing ever held in the U.S. Congress on the issue of West Papua.

Indonesia's Ambassador to the U.S., Dino Patti Djalal, said he was "not concerned by the hearing because it was only attended by three Congress people, and that the U.S. government should not change its stance."

"Ambassador Djalal is new to the U.S. and has failed to realize the importance of Wednesday's hearing," Faleomavaega said. "Little does Ambassador Djalal know but as a result of the attention this hearing was given, Papuan leaders met with officials at the National Security Council, the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of State, and other Members of Congress whose schedules did not permit them to attend the hearing."

"Regrettably, Ambassador Djalal's attitude is typical of Indonesian indifference to the serious concerns raised at the hearing. More than 50 Members of the U.S. Congress are so concerned by Indonesia's failure to implement Special Autonomy that they joined with Chairman Donald Payne of the Subcommittee on Africa and myself to urge President Obama to make the issue of West Papua one of his highest priorities when he visits Indonesia."

"The Members of Congress who signed this letter are mostly Members of the Congressional Black Caucus and Ambassador Djalal's remarks are really an affront to every person of conscience and color who is committed to ending the abuse and resolving the conflict in West Papua."

"The people of West Papua have suffered long enough at the hands of Indonesia's brutal military and police forces, and many experts suggest that West Papuans have been subjected to genocide. Whether or not genocide has taken place, one thing is clear. Indonesia's military has committed indisputable crimes against humanity through the murder, torture and rape of more than 100,000 West Papuans."

"While President SBY inherited a very difficult situation, I am disappointed that he has not been able to get his military under control and prevent further abuses in West Papua. I am also disappointed that he has not implemented Special Autonomy as promised. While Ambassador Djalal implies that the UN has already determined the status of West Papua, nothing could be further from the truth."

"This is no issue of territorial integrity. West Papua was a former Dutch colony for some 100 years just as East Timor was a former Portuguese colony just as Indonesia was a former colony of the Netherlands. Because of its status as a former colony, East Timor achieved its independence from Indonesia in 2002 through a referendum sanctioned by the United Nations (UN), despite Indonesia's serious objections over East Timor's right to self-determination."

"In contrast, in 1962 the United States pressured the Dutch to turn over control of West Papua to the United Nations. Under the U.S.-brokered deal, Indonesia was to 'make arrangements with the assistance and participation of the United Nations' to give Papuans an opportunity to determine whether they wished to become part of Indonesia or not."

“In what became known as the Act of No Choice carried out in 1969, 1025 West Papua elders under heavy military surveillance were selected to vote on behalf of 809,327 West Papuans regarding the territory’s political status. In spite of serious violations of the UN Charter and no broad-based referendum, West Papua was forced to become a part of Indonesia by the barrel of a gun.”

“According to the Congressional Research Service (CRS), ‘declassified documents released in July 2004 indicate that the United States supported Indonesia’s take-over of Papua in the lead up to the 1969 Act of Free Choice even as it was understood that such a move was likely unpopular with Papuans. The documents reportedly indicate that the United States estimated that between 85% and 90% of Papuans were opposed to Indonesian rule and that as a result the Indonesians were incapable of winning an open referendum at the time of Papua’s transition from Dutch colonial rule. Such steps were evidently considered necessary to maintain the support of Suharto’s Indonesia during the Cold War.’”

“Today, the U.S. provides millions of dollars in aid to Indonesia and its military but Indonesia will not allow Members of the U.S. Congress to visit Jayapura in West Papua. This is wrong and should not be tolerated by the U.S.”

“Indonesia should get serious about West Papua, and I will do everything I can to keep this issue in the spotlight, especially given that many Samoans served as missionaries to West Papua and brought Christianity to the islands. Some of my Samoan relatives are buried in West Papua and their service and sacrifice compels me to do what I can for the people they loved.”

“According to CRS, ‘migration by non-Melanesian Indonesians from elsewhere in the nation appears to be a critical part of the mounting tensions. By some accounts Melanesian Papuans will be in the minority in their homeland by 2015.’”

“We cannot allow this to happen. While there is so much more I want to say about the commercial exploitation of West Papua’s renowned mineral wealth which includes vast reserves of gold, copper, nickel, oil and gas and Freeport USA’s own shameful role in this exploitation, for now I want to commend the West Papuans who testified at last week’s hearing.”

“Mr. Octovianus Mote, Founder of the West Papua Action Network and President of the Papua Resource Center; Mr. Henkie Rumbewas, International Advocate of the Australia West Papua Association (AWPA); Mr. Salamon Maurits Yumame, Head of FORDEM (The Democratic Forum); S. Eben Kirksey, Ph.D., Visiting Assistant Professor of The Graduate Center, The City University of New York testified in support of and on behalf of the people of West Papua, making it plain to the U.S. Congress that Indonesia has failed to implement the Special Autonomy law which was passed in 2001. Consequently, they urged that a new dialogue should take place to determine a way forward.”

“Sophie Richardson, Ph.D., Asia Advocacy Director for Human Rights Watch addressed the issue of ongoing human rights abuses. Pieter Drooglever, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus,

Institute of Netherlands History, provided an historical background of events which have led to division and discord.”

“Mr. Nicholas Simeone Messet, a West Papuan who has lived in Sweden for the past 38 years or so, said that West Papuans are ‘lazy’ and should accept some of the blame for the failure of Special Autonomy. In my opinion it is wrong to blame the oppressed.”

“In his statement before the UN against Apartheid, Nelson Mandela said, ‘It will forever remain an accusation and challenge to all men and women of conscience that it took so long as it has before all of us stood up to say enough is enough.’ This is how I feel about West Papua. Others feel the same, despite Ambassador Djalal’s objectionable remarks which implied that no one really cares since Indonesia has more friends than critics in the U.S. Congress.”

“For the Ambassador’s information, 50 Members of the U.S. Congress as well as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Anan and more than 174 parliamentarians and 80 nongovernmental agencies from around the world have joined together to call upon Indonesia to end the violence and resolve the problems in West Papua. Simply put, this issue is not going away until Indonesia is held accountable, and I have every confidence that President Obama will, in fact, seek dialogue.”

“Until then, my thoughts and prayers are with the people of West Papua who only want what we all want – the right to live in peace and pursue happiness. In response to the hearing, I have received word that the families of some of our West Papuan witnesses have been visited by Indonesia police forces. I hope this is not the case but, for precautionary purposes, I am asking our U.S. Embassy in Jakarta to look into this disturbing report.”

“As a matter of record, I am also including the full text of my remarks which provide a detailed accounting of the purpose of this hearing,” Faleomavaega concluded.

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