

# At UN, CSI calls for land rights of indigenous peoples of West Papua to be protected

*Christian Solidarity International's statement against expanded land exploitation and military occupation provokes reaction from government of Indonesia*

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, March 28, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The indigenous peoples of West Papua face renewed threats to their land rights, Christian Solidarity International (CSI) warned at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva on March 28.

In an [oral statement](#) delivered during the 58th Session, CSI's Abigail

McDougal recalled that since assuming office last fall, Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto had announced a revival of the government's [transmigration](#) program to settle non-indigenous people in the province of West Papua. In addition, he had authorized the creation of two million hectares of new rice and sugar plantations, and a 50 percent increase in production capacity at the region's Tangguh liquid natural gas facility.

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These projects threaten not only the third largest rainforest in the world and one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet, but also the land that the indigenous peoples of West Papua call home.”

*Abi McDougal*



In the southern part of West Papua, Christian communities have erected 1,400 crosses to prevent the takeover of indigenous land. Photo Credit: CSI.

“These projects threaten not only the third largest rainforest in the world and one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet, but also the land that the indigenous peoples of West Papua call home,” CSI's Deputy Director of Public Policy and Communications stated. According to Amnesty International, the resulting environmental degradation would pose an “existential threat to the people of West Papua.”

The planned projects would entail an increased military presence in West Papua, which has been subjected to [military occupation](#) for decades. This “is

particularly concerning,” McDougal said, “as Indonesia’s parliament last week amended the country’s military law, removing checks on the military’s power.”

West Papua is the easternmost region of modern-day Indonesia. While Indonesia is the largest Muslim-majority country in the world, the indigenous peoples of West Papua are almost completely Christian.

West Papua was made a colony of the Netherlands in 1898, and was administered separately from Dutch-ruled Indonesia. It was only handed over to Indonesia in 1962, thirteen years after Indonesia became independent. This decision provoked widespread protests and an independence movement that continues until today.

With more than 79,000 West Papuans already internally displaced by military operations, protecting Papuans’ land ownership is an urgent imperative, McDougal said.

The UN’s 2021 Durban Declaration and Program of Action on combatting racism calls on states “to ensure that indigenous peoples are able to retain ownership of their lands and of those natural resources to which they are entitled under domestic law,” she recalled.

“Christian Solidarity International calls on the government of Indonesia to halt its transmigration program in West Papua, protect indigenous land rights, and allow international rights monitors to enter the region,” McDougal concluded.

The Indonesian delegation responded to CSI’s statement during the general debate, stating that they “reject the allegation that the Indonesian people in the six provinces of Papua are subjected to...discrimination” and pledging to “continue dialogue with all stakeholders, including with the local communities, to ensure their voices are heard.”

Reacting to the Indonesian delegation’s reply, CSI’s Director for Public Advocacy, Joel Veldkamp, said, “There could not be a greater contrast between the Indonesian government’s assurances at the Human Rights Council, and what we hear from our friends in West Papua – that Indonesian government-led projects cause them to fear for the very survival of their people.”

“We reiterate our call to the government of Indonesia to halt its destructive campaigns in West Papua.”

About CSI

Christian Solidarity International is an international human rights group campaigning for religious liberty and human dignity.

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