

# **FREE WEST PAPUA FROM INDONESIA**

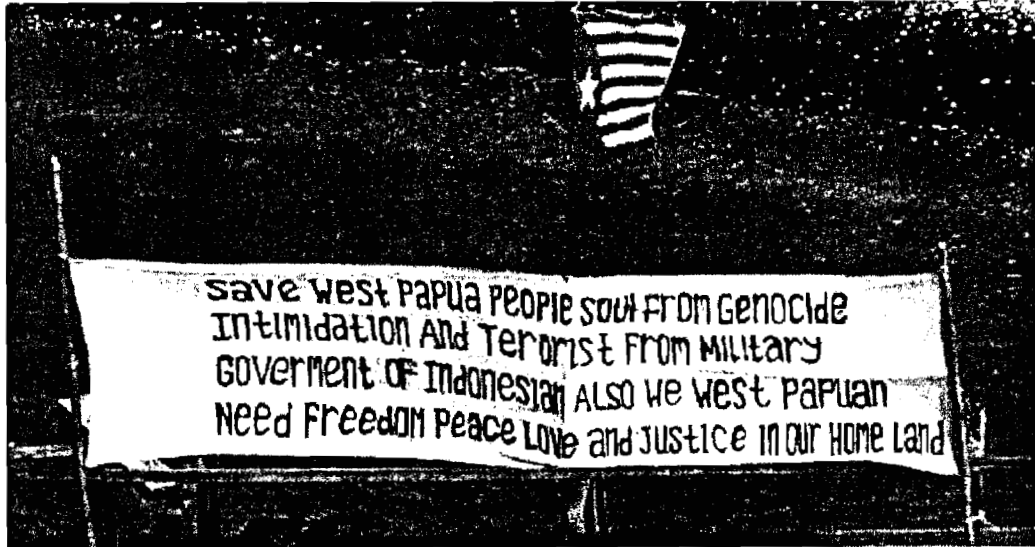
*BENNY WENDA'S SPEECH*

*on the*

*Fifth Session of the Permanent Forum on  
Indigenous Issues*

*United Nations Headquarters, New York,  
15-26 May 2006*

# Free West Papua from Indonesia



Dear brothers and sisters,

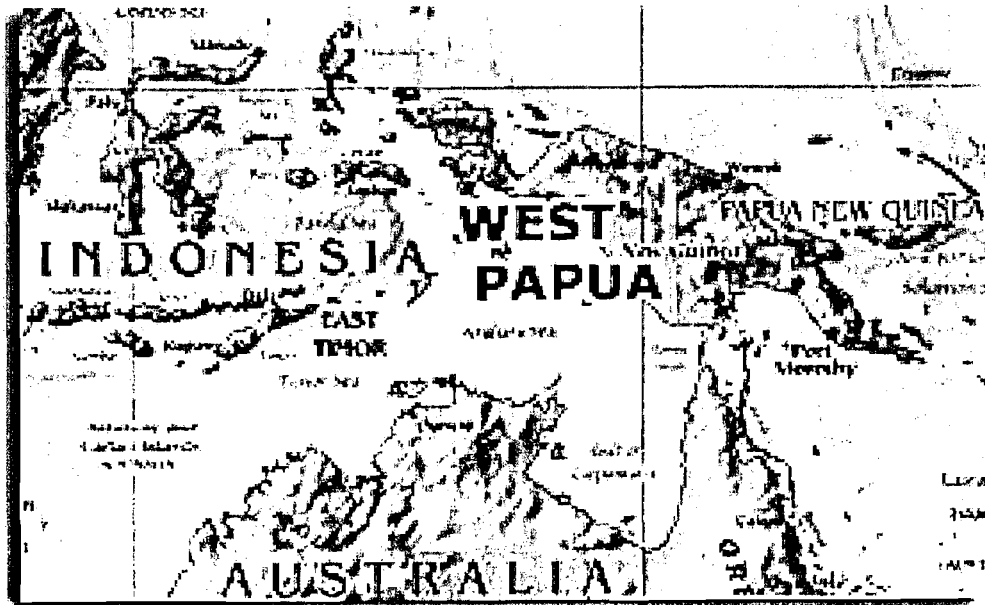
Have you heard about the 42 West Papuans who have been granted asylum in Australia this year? Put your hands up if you have.

Why do you think they were prepared to risk their lives in a small canoe in the sea? Because Indonesia is destroying us and taking our land.

My name's Benny Wenda and I am a Papuan tribal leader. I am worried my people will not exist in 20 years. We are not being treated like human beings because we have been denied the act of free choice. When we try to talk to Indonesia it sends its army in to kill us.

I am lucky to be alive and to stand up for my people today. I ask the United Nations to fulfil its promise it made to us 40 years ago. It promised us an act of free choice. We are still waiting. We West Papuans have been given the right to self determination. We were promised we would be given it by the West in 1962. But their promise was a lie – we have never been given it.

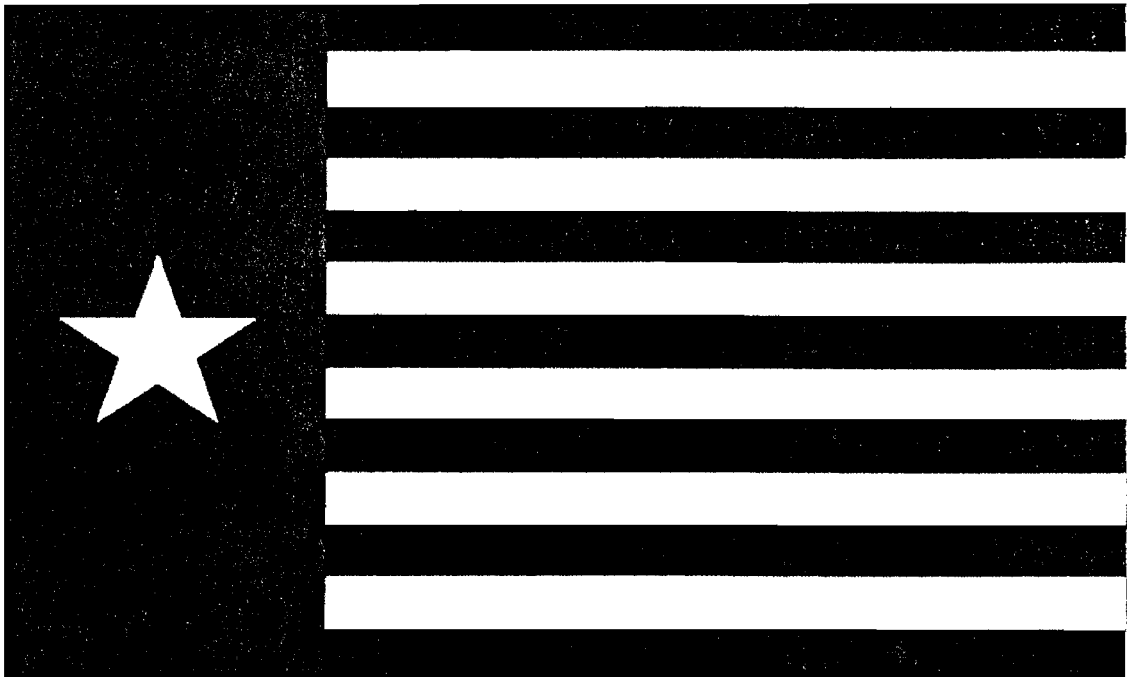
In the next 30 minutes you will hear about 40 years' of genocide. I will tell you how it started, what's happening now and why the United Nations needs to return to West Papua to fulfil its promise.



My country, West Papua, is north of Australia. It is famous for our bird of paradise, but very few people know about the genocide. It has been a silent genocide.

We used to be part of the Dutch empire. They gave us independence 1961. 3 months later the Indonesians invaded. The United States were worried about communism in Indonesia. In secret the United States agreed that Indonesia could take over West Papua if it held a referendum. This was called the act of free choice. But it was an act of no choice. It was our death sentence. In fact this organisation, the United Nations, has called it a sham. The international community knew it was a lie.

# F R E E W E S T P A P U A



[www.freewestpapua.org](http://www.freewestpapua.org)

## **What do West Papuans want?**

The cause of all our problems is the 'Act of no choice'. This organisation, the United Nations, promised us an 'Act of free choice'. We have never been asked what we want. I'm here today to tell you what we want – we want freedom! Freedom to live in peace and govern ourselves.

We say it is the duty of the United Nations to return to West Papua and give us genuine free choice. One person, one vote. Give us the chance to be heard before we disappear

=====

**Benny Wenda**  
Chair of DeMMaK (The Koteka Tribal Assembly)  
International Lobbyist in the UK for a Free West Papua  
PO Box 656, Oxford OX3 3AP England UK  
Mobile: +44 (0) 7791629782  
Email: [bwenda@infopapua.org](mailto:bwenda@infopapua.org)  
Web: <http://www.infopapua.org>

=====



*Photo of a victim of a military operation in West Papua*

I want to tell you about my own experiences.

When I was 4 my village was bombed from the air. We hid to the jungle for 5 years. Some of us died from the cold at night. We had to survive without our food gardens. When we surrendered we saw torture and killing by the Indonesian army. One of my relatives was raped and her breasts were cut off.

When I was a school boy no one would talk to me about what I had experienced, not even my mother. I wanted to know why we were bombed. I wanted to know why the Indonesian students spat at me. Why there was no West Papuan story in the school books and our languages and culture ignored. We only learnt about Indonesian history and culture.

I was jailed for 25 years for raising the West Papuan flag. I was kept chained in a dark cell while they tortured me. My legs still show the marks. I wasn't scared because I had the truth and I was right. I said, if you want to kill me please do, I'm standing for my people, I'm standing for Papua. I managed to escape.

We have no human rights. Our paradise has become a living hell.



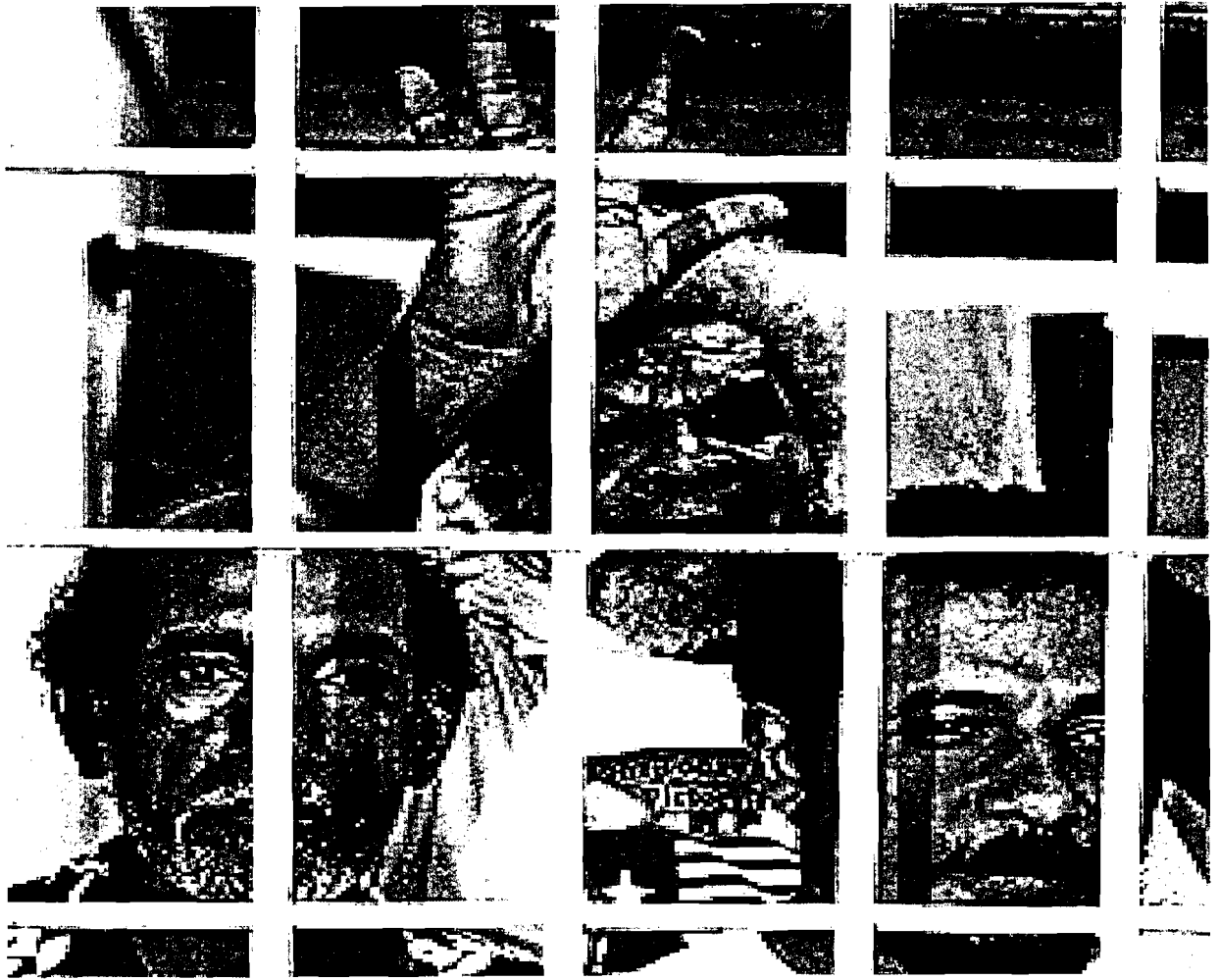
## **So what happened?**

In 1969 the United Nations arrived with just a few people. The Indonesians decided we were too primitive for democracy. They hand picked a thousand men at gun point and told them to vote. This is what your United Nations representative, Fernando Ortiz-sanz, said in his report:

“West Papua carried out in months what experts said should take 5 years. West Papuans did not have information. Indonesia did not accept one man, one vote.” He allowed Indonesia to make West Papua a military zone.

## **Why did this happen?**

Because our land is very rich. It has the world’s largest gold mine and the 3rd largest copper mine. It has a lot of hard timber, oil and gas. It is worth 500 US dollars million a year. We receive none of it. Our resources are stolen from us by BP, Freeport, Rio Tinto, and logging companies. They are working with the Indonesian government and army. We were never asked. When we ask for fair treatment we get the military attack us. We never gave permission. But we have given our lives.



### **What's happening now?**

They are killing us because we are inconvenient. The Indonesian military has killed at least one hundred thousand of us. They bomb and burn our villages when they suspect our loyalty. There are over 6 thousand of my people hiding in the jungle. It is genocide and this genocide has been recognised by Yale University's Law school. But it is a silent genocide because the international community does not know what is going on.

Indonesia has tried to destroy who we are. We cannot raise our flag; the morning star. If we use the word 'Papuan' we are likely to be killed or imprisoned. Two men were jailed for 10 and 15 years for raising our flag on Independence Day. It was a peaceful demonstration.



Yustinus Murib appeared on Australian TV asking for dialogue. He was killed a few days later.

Everyday we suffer. The government aid for health and education is used often used by the military. This is evil. There is an open door policy for Indonesian settlers and they are given the jobs. We are becoming a minority in our own homeland. Some of them make it clear they think we are stupid savages and animals.