The Ongoing Genocide Against These Blacks In Asia Just Got More Violent

By Editorial_Staff  -  Mar 9, 2019

AFRICANGLOBE – Humanitarian concern is growing for villagers who have been displaced by conflict in the Highlands between Indonesia’s military and the West Papua Liberation Army.

But even elected Papuan leaders in government pushing for a de-escalation of military operations risk a reprimand or threat of prosecution from Indonesia’s military.

In the latest bout of clashes recently, Indonesia’s military said between 50 and 70 Liberation Army fighters descended on soldiers guarding the construction of a bridge in Nduga’s Yigi district.

Indonesia’s military said three members died before the military was able to drive the rebels back. It also claimed that between seven and ten Liberation Army fighters were killed.

According to the Liberation Army, the violence on Thursday was sparked when Indonesian soldiers interrogated a local villager and then set fire to five houses.

Indonesian military and police operations intensified in the remote Highlands regency of Nduga in December after the Liberation Army allegedly killed at least 16 road construction workers.
The Indonesian government’s major Trans-Papua Road project was already controversial among Papuan Highlands communities without the involvement of military engineers on the job adding to mistrust among Papuans.

However as military operations to pursue the Liberation Army’s guerilla fighters ramped up, thousands of Nduga villagers caught in the middle of hostilities fled to the bush or neighbouring regencies such as Jayawijaya.

An Indonesian academic, Hipolitus YR Wangge of Jakarta’s Marthinus Academy, has been working on research in Papua and found himself volunteering help for Nduga’s refugees streaming into Jayawijaya’s main town of Wamena.

He said the people were traumatised and short on basic needs, having come from a regency which is extremely isolated. According to him, over two thousand Nduga people have sought refuge in the Wamena area, including over six hundred children.

“Those refugees are coming down from the jungle, from Nduga, and they have nothing here, even the local (Jayawijaya) government here say ‘these are not our people, these are not Jayawijaya people, it is Nduga regency people, so let their government deal with this one’,” he said.

Papuan rebels fighting to expel the Indonesian invaders.

“On the other hand, Nduga’s government, their focus is mainly on those Nduga people who are running away and staying in the (local) jungle.”

The impact of displacement was also seen by Peter Prove, a member of a delegation from the World Council of Churches which was last month permitted to visit Papua.
“And in particular in Wamena we met with a group of more than 400 children and adolescents who were displaced, and who were being provided with refuge in the compound of the Roman Catholic Church there,” he explained.

“And we heard very alarming stories about the circumstances under which they had fled from their territory, including indications of a very strong-armed military response.”

An emergency makeshift school was established by volunteer groups in Wamena for the displaced children. However last month when Indonesian military and police personnel came to the school, a number of children reportedly ran away in fear.

Concerned for the displaced communities, governor of Papua, Lukas Enembe, recently called for Indonesia’s president to withdraw troops to allow villagers to return home and access basic needs.

His call was echoed by local parliamentarians, customary leaders, church and civil society organisations who continue to press for a de-escalation of military operations in the region.

However Indonesia’s military spokesman in Papua, Colonel Muhammad Aidi, has warned that the governor had violated state law and should be prosecuted.

“A governor is an extension of the state in the region and is obliged to defend the sovereignty of the republic of Indonesia,” Colonel Aidi explained.

“A governor must support all national strategic programs. But on the contrary the governor through his statement actually inhibited the national development process.”

A West Papuan anthropologist based in Australia, Yamin Kogoya, worries that telling the truth in his homeland has become an act of treason.

He said that by practically labelling Governor Enembe a supporter of the Free West Papua Movement, Colonel Aidi had added to the sense of threat over this leading elected official who is already being investigated by Indonesian anti-corruption investigators.

“This is a very, very harsh statement by the military spokesperson in Papua against the governor of Papua province who has every right to express his concerns and worries about the welfare of the people under his care,” Mr Kogoya said.

“He never, ever expressed publicly that he supports the independence of Papua.”
Following the Liberation Army’s alleged killing of road construction workers, the chairman of the Papua People’s Assembly, Timotius Murib, said he and his colleagues condemned the violence. He added that security approaches rarely helped in Papua.

“This does not solve the problem in Papua, but instead creates human rights violations and trauma for indigenous Papuans,” Mr Munib said.

Indonesian police and military posts are common in every town and most villages throughout Papua. From his observations in the region, Peter Prove said the increasing militarisation and security approach in Papua had only exacerbated the problems there.

“There are many accusations and counter-accusations as to who is responsible for specific instances of violence. But I think the military approach to securing and stabilising the territory evidently hasn’t worked not in terms of improving the human rights situation in the region.”

Armed conflict between the Liberation Army and Indonesian security forces is mainly confined to the Highlands region. The Papuan guerillas are outnumbered and outgunned by Indonesia’s military forces, yet are also difficult to totally defeat, as they easily move in and out of the bush in their rugged home terrain.

But the presence of Indonesia’s military, special forces, police, and intelligence agents throughout Papua have added to a climate of fear for Papuans.

According to Mr Wangge, the Indonesian government appears to favour the security approach as the most effective way of containing Papuan resistance, even though it does not win hearts and minds of Papuans.

He said that Jakarta had long since identified core problems in Papua – related to historical grievances, politics, human rights abuses and economic development. But apart from its promotion of economic development through its major infrastructure drive, Mr Wangge said the government had not openly addressed these core problems in a wholehearted way that involved Papuan participation.

While it was difficult to pinpoint why the problems hadn’t been confronted Mr Wangge said the military was still a powerful political entity within the Indonesian republic.

“If human rights or historical problems will be discussed both by central and local governments, the military will face some legal consequences for this one,” he said.
Mr Wangge, who has been involved with efforts to build temporary schools for the children displaced in Wamena, was doubtful whether President Joko Widodo’s economic development approach was a lasting solution either for Papuans’ grievances.

“To some point, yes, it can benefit some Papuans,” he said, “but the benefits of the economic approach, it’s only for outsiders, non-Papuans, Asian immigrants – that’s how many Papuans see it.”

This was echoed by Mr Murib, who said “we as state institutions that are representatives of indigenous Papuans have never been involved in discussing the Trans Papua road project”.

“Papuans are eliminated from their own land, lose their rights as indigenous people and face depopulation problems. Papuans want life, not roads and companies.”

He said if the central government respected Papua’s Autonomy Law, and indigenous Papuans, it should “sit down to talk with us for all forms of policy in Papua”.

Meanwhile, Colonel Aidi has confirmed an extra 600 military personnel have been deployed to Nduga region to secure conditions for construction of the Trans Papua road to proceed.

Since December, dozens of people have died in escalating clashes in Nduga. The Liberation Army has indicated it was willing to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the conflict, but Colonel Aidi suggested this would be not be possible.

“The aim of Indonesia’s military is to preserve the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia. If the purpose of the “armed criminal group” is to be independent from Indonesia, surely the dialogue or negotiation will never be realised.”

Armed conflict continues in Papua, intractable as ever.

By: Johnny Blades