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Our Morning Star: 60 Years of Resistance

This year marks the 60th anniversary of when the Morning Star flag was first raised in protest against Indonesia's occupation of West Papua. To commemorate the occasion, a coalition of non-government organisations and social movements in the Pacific had organised solidarity flag raising ceremonies across the region.

Led by [Youngsolwara Pacific](#), the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), Pacific Islands Associations of NGOs (PIANGO) and Fiji based NGO partners convened a prayer for West Papua and a flag raising ceremony at the PCC Peace Garden in Suva, Fiji.

The Vanuatu Free West Papua Association and Shefa Province hoisted the Morning Star flag in Port Vila at the provincial headquarters which was later marked with celebrations.

Peaceful demonstrations and flag raising ceremonies took place outside parliament buildings and parks in Australia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, and the Solomon Islands, with many convening virtually.

A regional [online arts exhibition](#) themed, "Our Morning Star Exhibition" – was also launched to commemorate 60 years of resistance by West Papuans, and to celebrate the importance of the arts for activism and soft diplomacy in West Papua's struggle for independence.

The virtual exhibition features a diverse collection of art, music, poetry, vlogs and podcasts with submissions from activists and supporters of West Papua, including West Papuan based artists and political leaders.

Rosa Moiwend of Youngsolwara Pacific said in the past six decades, tens of thousands of indigenous Papuans have been killed and continue to face severe human rights abuses at the hands of Indonesian security forces.

“We appeal to the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders to prioritise West Papua and take action to help protect the rights of indigenous West Papuans, as well as, support us in our struggle to gain self-autonomy from Indonesia,” she added.

While the Pacific Islands Forum leaders have committed to the cause of West Papua since the year 2000, they have failed to address and progress the issue at the United Nations Human Rights Council.

In December 2020, at the conclusion of the 111th Session of the Council of Ministers of the Organisation of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), the leaders also passed a resolution for the President of OACPS to request “an urgent mission to West Papua” to prepare a report on its human rights situation “as soon as possible.”

Ralph Reganvanu, who is also the Secretary of the Melanesian Indigenous Land Defense Alliance (MILDA), says “everyone knows what is going on in West Papua, yet everyone is being quiet on the issue.”

Reganvanu described West Papua as “the greatest betrayal of everything the international world order stands for, a great betrayal by the United Nations, and members of the security council.”

He said the human rights violations have continued to increase because of “deliberate ignorance by neighbours in the Pacific.”

“Injustice continues to be perpetuated, increased and expanded,” Mr Reganvanu said, adding that “now it’s become intergenerational.”

“We have generations of West Papuans who because their right to self-determination were denied 60 years ago have continued to suffer...despite this, each year on December 1st the Morning Star is raised to remember those who have passed in struggle, but to celebrate the spirit of enduring resistance to see a free West Papua.”

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