

[Statement of position and appeal by religious leaders in Papua to the Governor and Provincial House of Representatives concerning inter-religious conditions in Papua]

Jayapura, 10 April 2002

The Governor of Papua
The Chairperson of the Provincial House of the Representatives (DPRD) Papua

Re: Position Statement and Appeal by the Religious Leaders in Papua

Greetings,

The general mood in Papua that we have observed recently is one in which the religious/secular community is apprehensive, disturbed, and expressing doubts about peace and safety, both now and in the immediate future. This is understandable given that the prevailing atmosphere in Indonesia provides a constant reminder of the effect of violence, conflict, fighting and disputes. It would seem that its impact in Papua too is inevitable, because reliable communications clearly indicate that various kinds of persons are bringing their troubles from one place to another.

The public mood is of prime interest and concern to us, the religious leaders in Papua, especially given that these troubles are indicating violence and conflict with a possibly ethnic or religious basis. Incidences of inter-personal disagreement can easily be generalised as inter-ethnic or religious in nature, so creating malice and unrest. The reports in the general media and the indications that Laskar Jihad has entered Papua in the form of soldiers with a specific mission provide an opportunity for the creation of conflict and violence in the local community.

Faced with this prevailing atmosphere, we are moved to appeal and state, clearly and unequivocally, the following:

1. May all of God's people who come here to Papua be united in a collective declaration, apparent in mind and deed, that we are peace-loving. Indeed, as we have already declared to the world: PAPUA IS A ZONE OF PEACE; a region without violence, a place where the inhabitants share good relations, reject violence and avoid all conflict.
2. May members of God's religious communities who come here to Papua together build a communion that is founded on peace and harmony, and which rejects violent conflict within its fellowship - as true participants in a religious community - as well as among fellow citizens and those from other faiths. Our call is truly genuine, for it is taught to us by our faith that we must live as brothers and sisters in harmony and peace. It is our primary and singular duty.
3. May brothers and sisters, the leaders of the People of God, both in provincial level and lower level, we should never cease to proclaim and strive for our own living example of harmony and peace towards others.
4. As religious leaders in Papua, we unequivocally reject any plan, effort or activity in whatever shape or form that inclines towards violence, conflict and the splintering of the religious/secular

community. We reject all forms of masked religious militias that stand for a struggle that has the potential only to create disturbance, disorder, conflict and fighting.

5. We respectfully request all sides to work together to reject any action or attempt to create hostility among religious/secular community members, whether on the basis of ethnicity or religion.

6. We ask the Provincial Government to seriously apply itself so that grievances that have not yet been finalised and which have the potential to unleash violence are resolved quickly in an open manner. Such grievances include, among others: the Abepura case and the slaying of Theys Eluay. At the same time the Provincial Government should commit itself to the prevention of further serious incidences that may incite violence and betray the community's trust in good government.

Herewith our position statement and appeal.

Issued at Jayapura:

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