

Draft Release

“Empowerment and Liberative Approach to Tanah Papua Needed” – Pacific Conference of Churches  
Suva, 23. February 2019

JAKARTA “There is a need to support the empowerment of indigenous Church and communities in Papua as they continue to face ongoing human rights abuses and structural violence,” says Pacific Conference of Churches General Secretary, Rev. James Bhagwan.

Rev. Bhagwan was part of a World Council of Churches delegation that observed continued serious human rights violations and a progressing marginalization of indigenous during a visit to Indonesia between February 13 – 22. The members urged the Government of Indonesia to take firm action to uphold the rule of law and hold accountable those who have committed human rights violations in the past.

As a part of the “Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace “, the delegation was hosted by the PGI (Communion of Churches in Indonesia) and by the GKI (Protestant Church in Papua) and met representatives of churches, civil society and government in Jakarta, Java and in the provinces of Papua and Papua Barat. Parts of the delegation visited churches and communities of other religions in Surabaya, and met with authorities, churches and civil society representatives in Port Numbay, Merauke, Wamena and Manokwari.

“The ongoing structural violence experienced by indigenous Papuans is deeply disturbing,” said Bhagwan. “The calls for self-determination that PCC have heard over the years is a response to the failure of the Special Autonomy Law for the Province of Papua on many levels.”

During the visit, a pastoral appeal was made by church leaders of the two Papuan provinces which included PCC member churches, for the WCC to call for a mediated dialogue process between the Indonesian government and the ULMWP for conflict resolution.

“This dialogue is important for a sustained process to address the failures of the Special Autonomy Law to protect the civil and political rights, as well as social, cultural and economic rights of indigenous Papuans, which Indonesia has covenanted with the United Nations.”

Bhagwan also met with PCC member churches GKI, KINGMI and received an application from GIDI, one of the largest indigenous churches in Tanah Papua.

Pacific Conference of Churches will continue to assist in general capacity building programmes for our member churches and is also looking to strengthen the theological tools which the Churches use to effectively respond to the structural violence indigenous Papuans are experiencing.

“There is a deep well of contextual and liberative theology from Melanesia and the rest of the Pacific that our member churches can draw from for their work. We need to ensure that they can access that to be better equipped in their ministry.”

Rev. Bhagwan also had discussions with PGI, the Communion of Churches in Indonesia on better cooperation to support Papuan people.

“We cannot work in isolation. Just as we work with our member churches in Papua, we must also work with the national communion of churches in Indonesia to support their journey and efforts for peace and wellbeing for the people and land of Papua.”

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