



Talanoa Toktok

Quarterly Newsletter of the Pacific Conference of Churches

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SOLIDARITY



PROTESTS have taken place in Vanuatu to support a call for investigations into human rights abuse by Indonesian security forces in Papua.

The governments of Vanuatu and Tuvalu moved further to support the people of Papua by addressing the issue at the

United Nations and calling for international intervention.

The renewed activity in Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea follows a concerted effort by Pacific churches to urge regional governments to prevent torture, false arrests and the killing of Papuans

by security forces and civilian militia supported by Indonesia.

The PCC Executive Committee in Auckland in September has called for an immediate cessation of violence and the removal of troops.

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Obituary



Tuvalu

Losses

leader

THE Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu has lost its President, Elder Kalahati Kilei.

In a message to the church, the PCC Secretariat on behalf of its members noted the deep loss for Tuvalu and the EKT.

Rev. Kilei was outspoken at the recent Pacific Islands Forum leaders' meeting in Tuvalu.

PCC General Secretary, Reverend James Bhagwan said: "I offer my personal condolences, as well as those of our Moderator, Rev. Dr. Tevita Havea, Deputy Moderator, Deaconess Temalesi Makutu and the PCC team as well as our member churches and national councils of churches.

"I will continue to reflect on his message to the Pacific Leaders on building the household of the Pacific on the foundation, the rock that is Christ as it applies to our work in PCC.."

We stand with Papua, Pacific churches say

THE Pacific Conference of Churches' Executive Committee has given its support for members in Papua.

At a meeting in Auckland, New Zealand, the committee received a letter from churches in Papua, seeking support for a visit by the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights and the removal of Indonesian troops.

The committee tasked the secretariat, headed by General Secretary, Reverend James Bhagwan to respond to Papua's churches.

Here is his letter: To the Ecumenical Forum for Churches in Papua:

To our dear sisters and brothers in Christ in the Land of Papua - Grace and Peace to you from your family in the Pacific Conference of Churches!

We received your 4th Pastoral Appeal from the Ecumenical Forum of Churches in Papua as the PCC Executive Committee gathered for its annual meeting in Auckland.

Your letter, sharing the stories of extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests and ongoing actions of violent racism

through terror and intimidation, supported and perpetrated by the Indonesian State towards the people of Papua, has deeply moved us in spirit.

In particular, the ongoing 'silent' war crimes being perpetrated in the Nduga Regency over the last 9 months that have displaced over 40 percent of the population of the province (45,532 refugees), caused the death of 183 people from sickness and malnutrition, and 6 people from bullet wounds; as well as the closure of 39 churches, is of serious concern to us as a humanitarian crisis.

We join you in condemning these crimes against the people of Papua and reaffirm the need for the Indonesian government to engage in genuine actions to bring restorative justice to the Land of Papua.

We reaffirm the calls you have made:

1. The Government of Indonesia must immediately free all those who have been captured and imprisoned for protesting racism throughout the Land of Papua and in Jakarta.
2. The immediate cessation of military and paramilitary operations in the Nduga Re-

gency and withdrawal of all troops from the Land of Papua. 3. The United Nations Human Rights Commission must be given immediate and unconditional access to the Land of Papua. Independent Human Rights Organisations, and Foreign Journalists must be given unfettered access to Papua investigate that actions of killing and violence that have been experienced by victims throughout the Land of Papua. 4. The Government of Indonesia should immediately agree to negotiations with ULMWP as it did with GAM in Aceh as a negotiations partner mediated by a third party.

We commit to sharing this information with our churches, governments, the World Council of Churches and United Nations system and continuing to advocate for just peace, human rights and the right of the people of Papua to determine the type of development, governance and social structures they feel best suits them. Above all we will continue to pray for you and remember you

With our deep love and solidarity,

Timeline of violence and oppression



December 1 1961 Papua gains independence from the Netherlands

October 1962 After war between Indonesia and Papua, the Netherlands hands over territory to the United Nations

December 1969 UN cedes Papua to the

United Nations and civil unrest begins

1969-2019 US, Australian and British interests take Papuan coal, gold and timber. Indonesia attempts to change ethnic profile of Papua through transmigration programme

Obituary



Methodists

Mourn

Ratabacaca

FIJI'S Methodist Church has buried a former President, Laisiasa Ratabacaca, who died after a short illness this month

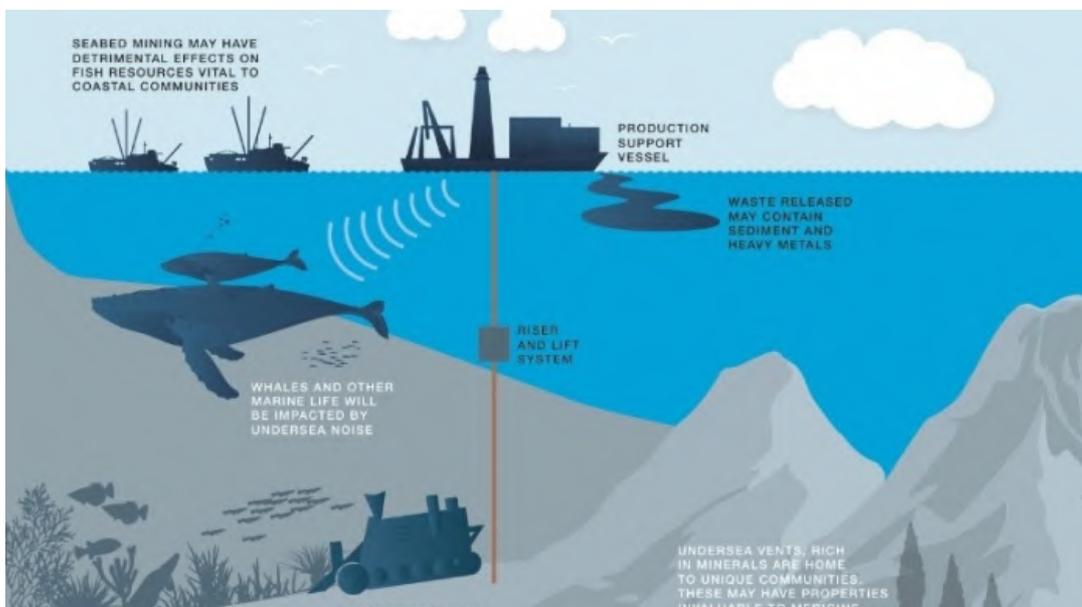
Ratabacaca was one of the few Methodist ministers educated in a foreign theological college in the 1970s.

Identified at an early age as a potential leader, he was sent to the United States for further study and returned to teach at the Davuilevu Theological College.

Known for his frugal lifestyle, love of gardening and books, Ratabacaca was elected president in 2002 and served until 2008.

He returned as interim head in 2014 on the death of Rev Tuikilakila Waqairatu before returning to retirement.

Born in Cicia, Lau, Ratabacaca will be remembered for his outspoken stance against the Bainimarama coup of 2006..



No to seabed mining

THE Pacific Conference of Churches has reaffirmed its calls for a regional moratorium on Deep Sea/Seabed Mining in the Pacific.

And it has called on member churches to continue to advocate on this issue with their governments as part of their prophetic role.

“We continue to be grateful for the support from our partners regionally and globally and for those who join us in this call,” PCC General Secretary, Reverend James Bhagwan said in a statement.

“We applaud the decisions by the Fiji and Vanuatu governments to impose a 10-year moratorium on Deep Sea / Seabed Mining announced during the Civil Society Dialogue at this year’s Pacific Island Forum Leaders Meeting in Tuvalu.

“We continue to reject any attempts by regional and international bodies to attempt to validate exploration and mining which undermine the Precautionary Approach and the concern of Pacific communities for free, prior and informed

consent. We are very concerned that the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and International Seabed Authority are proceeding with this agenda.

Rev Bhagwan said the PCC urged other Pacific Island countries to “solidify the principles of traditional stewardship for nature and, in turn, for our people by enabling good health, secure and enjoyable livelihoods and progress that captures the Pacific spirit of nurturing both living (sentient) and non-living (non-sentient) entities.”

“The UN Decade of Ocean Science is a neutral initiative for Leaders to align with and a positive goal to aspire to that would have the support of communities. Recommending a Moratorium is not requiring the industry not to commence, it is advising the industry to be put on hold so the research that will be taking place as part of the Decade of Oceans can better inform Leaders in how to progress with the DSM industry if they chose to do so,” Rev Bhagwan said.

“This is truly utilizing the Precautionary and ecosystem approaches as per the 2017 Ocean Conference in New York which is in line with the implementation on the Sustainable Development Goal 14 for a thriving ocean.”

He said that with the recent release of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Oceans and Cryosphere, churches had the strongest possible proof of the need to protect oceans in order to ensure the survival of both the Pacific and the Planet.

The Pacific Ocean covers approximately one third of the planet’s surface and is responsible for producing one quarter of the oxygen and absorbs 15 percent of the world’s carbon emissions.

“The health and wellbeing of our Moana, our Wai Tui, our Solwara is essential,” Rev Bhagwan said..

Grassroots movements across the Pacific have been increasingly raising their cries of opposition to land and sea extractive industries.)



Kids have say In climate discussion

CHIKDREN took part in discussions on climate change during a recent PCC visit to the relocated Vunidogoloa Village on Vanua Levu in Fiji.

Special attention was given to allow children, the elderly and women to speak about their experiences of climate change.

Image: PCC Climate change expert, Frances Namoumoum with children at Vunidogoloa.

Theological Students

Learn skills

STUDENTS at Kiribati's Tangintebu Theological College received training in leadership and management in July to help them better perform their pastoral roles.

The training was conducted over two weeks and attended by 60 students and faculty members.

This was a joint initiative of the Pacific Conference of Churches and the Institute of Mission and Research of the Pacific Theological College.

Designed to increase management and leadership skills, the two-week course gives students an insight into these systems through a Christian lens.

A similar programme will be held in Vanuatu in early October.

Participants said the course provided valuable insights into leadership and accountability.

Breakthrough at Forum talks

CHURCHES spearheaded an initiative at the Pacific Islands Forum Meeting in Tuvalu to draw leaders and civil society closer together.

The churches urged civil society to use a more inclusive and less aggressive approach, leading to the adoption of key issues on climate change, West Papua, deep sea mining and the eradication of violence against women.

Samoa's Prime Minister, Tuilaepa Aiono Sailele Malielegaoi, told civil society delegates that he was impressed by their presentation and approach.

Tuilaepa said it was the first time he had appreciated non-government actors making contributions to the Forum and he looked forward to greater future engagement.

The Samoan PM is known for being outspoken and critical of NGO activities.

PCC General Secretary, Reverend James Bhagwan, said Tuilaepa's comments sig-

nalled the possibility of greater cooperation between church and state for the development and support of Pacific people.

On the issue of West Papua, Leaders welcomed the invitation by Indonesia for a mission to the region) by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and strongly encouraged both sides to finalise the timing of the visit and for an evidence-based, informed report on the situation to be provided before the next Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting in 2020

Rev Bhagwan said this was a major step for regional leaders.

Fiji and Papua New Guinea are fiercely opposed to autonomy for West Papua.

On the nuclear issue, which the PCC has championed since the 1960s, leaders agreed to request a meeting with the United States President to discuss current and emerging issues of the nuclear testing legacy in the Marshall Islands and in the Blue Pacific.