


TALANOA TOKTOK

Official Publication of the Pacific Conference of Churches

Merdeka!

We stand with Papua

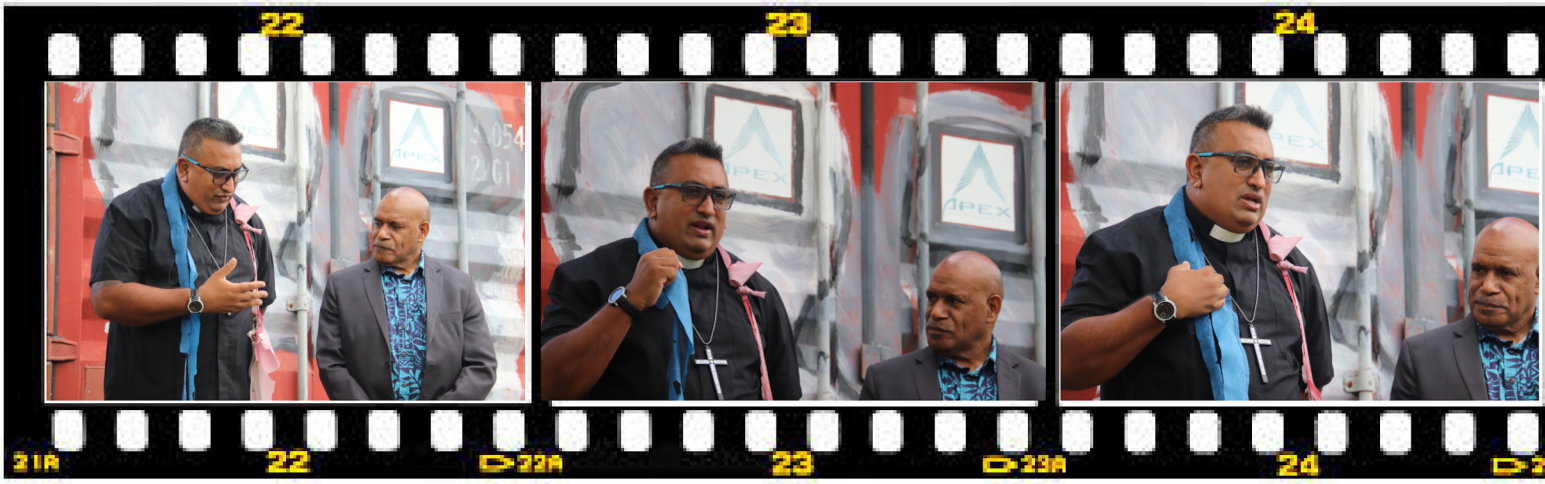


THE Morning Star flag flies again over Suva as Civil Society stands in solidarity with West Papua. Benny Wenda, leader of the United Liberation Movement for West Papua, visited Suva and met civil society leaders, updating them on the situation in the Indonesian annexed territory.

In a special ceremony, Wenda handed over a Morning Star flag - symbol of Papuan freedom - to the PCC.

This replaces a flag which flew at the PCC Secretariat for four years.

The ceremony was attended by the Pacific Network on Globalisation, Wansolwara and the Pacific Island Association of NGOs.



Narrative changes

More attention on freedom struggle

THE global narrative on West Papua has started to change as more attention is placed on the territory.

Earlier this year a Papuan group took New Zealand pilot, Philip Mehrtens, hostage and demanded independence from Indonesia. The hostage situation has led to the deaths of 30 Papuans and at least nine Indonesian special forces troops. Attempts by Indonesian security forces to secure Mehrtens release have proven futile despite several raids in the largely Christian district of Wamena where freedom fighters have a stronghold.

Recent media reports have started to cover the issues behind the continued struggle for freedom, six decades after the former Dutch New Guinea was handed over to Indonesia in a United Nations-sanctioned vote in 1969 which has been questioned by international organisations.

The vote saw 1000 hand-picked individuals support a UN move to hand over authority of

Dutch New Guinea despite a previous plan agreed by the Netherlands.

The initial agreement between the Netherlands and the Papuan people was for a transition to independence separate from Indonesia.

But political and economic interests of the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom ensured that there was no support for the Papuans.

In the first half of 2023, media reports have started to highlight these facts as part of the coverage of the hostage situation and extrajudicial killings by the Indonesian security forces.

Pacific Conference of Churches General Secretary, Reverend James Bhagwan, said the narrative shift had been noted.

"It has taken a long time for the international media to pick up on the issues behind the West Papua troubles," Bhagwan said.

"But the truth will eventually be told. It must be told"

Why does the PCC care about Papua?



WHEN the Pacific Conference of Churches met in 1966 for its first General Assembly in Lifou, New Caledonia, Papua was there. The Dutch Reformed Church sent two representatives and we have been invested in the struggle for six decades. Now, the PCC has four member churches in West Papua and this may grow in November.





We are women

Theologians, feminists meet

MORE than 40 theologians and feminists from around the Pacific gathered in Nadi to discuss equality and the roles of women in development.

Participants travelled from as far north as the Republic of the Marshall Islands and included members of the clergy, lay church workers and activists.

Themed, Liberation On All Territories, the three-day symposium discussed practical and theological issues faced by Pacific women, especially in the area of Violence Against Women.

There was also an opportunity for participants to discuss liberation from the perspective of women while building networks.

Hosted by the Pacific Conference of Churches, women shared the tools they had used to respond to issues in their communities.

PCC Gender Team Leader, Reverend Siera Bird said women from 11 countries attended the workshop.

"They were able to continue their dialogue on what true liberation means to Pacific women and how their goals can be achieved."

The PCC activity was funded by UN Women.





Thank you, churches

THE Pacific Conference of Churches has expressed its gratitude to member churches for their help in the successful implementation of the region's first Safe Church Programme.

Focused specifically on the safety of children, the UNICEF-funded programme has been rolled out in Northern Fiji and the Marshall Islands with Solomon Islands to follow shortly.

Regional church leaders were instrumental in guiding the programme design, beginning in 2020.

With the pilot stage completed, the PCC will hand over activities to the Fiji Council of Churches for continued local action.

In November, the Child Protection Team will report to the PCC General Assembly in Noumea on the success of the activity.

Child Protection Team Leader, Adi Mariana Waqa, said the PCC was thankful for the support of church leaders, members and communities for their willingness to help in the protection of the region's children.

The child protection work has been carried out with the support of Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic and reformed churches .

Jesus Loves the Little Children
Matthew 19: 13 - 15

Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them.

But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (19: 13-14)