Dear (name and title of your parliamentary representative)

My name is (your name) and I am a constituent of yours.

I am writing to you because it has come to my attention about serious concerns regarding the current situation in Indonesian occupied **West Papua.**

I was shocked to hear about serious human rights abuses, military occupation and accusations of genocide not far from New Zealand in West Papua. I learned that West Papua (bordering Papua New Guinea to the East) was a Dutch colony for decades, with the promise of independence and the raising of the West Papuan national flag in 1961, the symbol of a nation. However it is with horror that I learnt how the people of West Papua were betrayed by other nations and their right to self-determination ignored by the New Zealand government. Since 1963, an estimated 500,000 West Papuans have died at the hands of the Indonesian occupying forces, more than 25% of the population[[1]](#footnote-1).

There is hard evidence that genocide has been committed, a paper prepared by the Yale Law School for the Indonesian Human Rights Campaign in 2004 stated, “[There is] in the available evidence a strong indication that the Indonesian government has committed genocide against the West Papuans”[[2]](#footnote-2), and the University of Sydney concluded that the continuation of current practices in West Papua “may pose serious threats to the survival of the indigenous people of the Indonesian province of Papua.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

The cause of the conflict is the denial of the West Papuans’ right to self-determination, recognised by the international community throughout the 1950s and 60s. Yet in 1962, the US government, whist trying to appease Indonesia due to cold war politics, organised the “New York Agreement”, which was tantamount to the USA forcing the Netherlands to relinquish control of West Papua to Indonesia.

This occupation was justified by the ironically named “Act of Free Choice”, an event promised under the terms of the New York Agreement which was supposed to be a one person-one vote referendum on the choice between Independence or integration with Indonesia. This never happened. The Indonesian military hand-picked 1,026 Papuan elders to ‘represent’ the then population of 800,000.[[4]](#footnote-4) They forced them at gun point to vote for Indonesia, a referendum consisting of less than 0.2% of the population, illegal under international law.

In the words of US Embassy staff:

*"The Act of Free Choice (AFC) in West Irian [an Indonesian name for West Papua] is unfolding like a Greek tragedy, the conclusion preordained. The main protagonist, the GOI (Government of Indonesia), cannot and will not permit any resolution other than the continued inclusion of West Irian in Indonesia.”[[5]](#footnote-5)*Even the UK government formally admitted in 2004 that the 1969 ‘Act of Free Choice’ consisted of, “***1,000 handpicked representatives … [who] were largely coerced into declaring for inclusion in Indonesia*”**[[6]](#footnote-6)**.**
Ever since 1969 **the brutal Indonesian military occupation of West Papua has continued unabated with deaths almost every week amid the rapidly deteriorating human rights situation. Many West Papuans have already been tortured and killed this year and only recently 2 West Papuan youths were shot dead and 4 others injured by the Indonesian military at church service.**[[7]](#footnote-7)
 **Even the raising of the West Papuan national flag is prohibited under Indonesian law and Papuans are routinely imprisoned for 15 years just for raising it, just as in the case of civil servant Filep Karma.**[[8]](#footnote-8)

This is a true tragedy right on New Zealand’s doorstep, just like the genocide and illegal Indonesian occupation of East Timor. I am appalled that a travesty of human rights can go ahead so unnoticed by so many New Zealanders and our government.

How can we watch this genocide go on, just 250km North of our shores?

As your constituent, I am calling upon you to support the rights of the West Papuan people. The people of West Papua are asking only for their human right to self-determination. **Papuans are calling for a new vote, which meets recognised international standards**, in the form of a new UN-monitored independence referendum. All they ask for is to have the choice to live in a free country, free from human rights abuses or persecution just like we do in New Zealand.

There is hope for the West Papuan people. Recently the United Liberation Movement for West Papua was granted Observer Status within the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) and West Papua is now receiving strong support from several countries.
The people of West Papua desperately need more international parliamentary support and advocacy.

Please do raise the plight of the West Papuans and specifically their right to self-determination with the government and other parliamentarians, asking them to support the fulfilment of self-determination for the West Papuan people.

Please also join the International Parliamentarians for West Papua (IPWP), an international organisation launched in 2008, and supported by many New Zealand representatives, whose goals are to develop international parliamentary support and awareness for the West Papuan civil resistance movement, the illegality of the 1969 Act of Free Choice, and to highlight the inalienable right of the people of West Papua to determine their own future through a free and fair referendum.

More information, including how to join can be found via the IPWP website here: [www.ipwp.org](http://www.ipwp.org)

IPWP already has over 80 registered members worldwide, including, I am very happy to say, 10 members from New Zealand[[9]](#footnote-9).

I am calling on you to please support our Pacific neighbours of West Papua, showing the world that we uphold our core principles of freedom and justice for all.

I look forward to receiving your reply.

Yours sincerely,

(Your Name)

1. http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/03/201232172539145809.html [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.law.yale.edu/documents/pdf/Intellectual\_Life/West\_Papua\_final\_report.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://sydney.edu.au/arts/peace\_conflict/practice/west\_papua\_project.shtml [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/29/west-papua-independence-history [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB128/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200405/ldhansrd/vo041213/text/41213-02.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. http://freewestpapua.org/go/1967 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. http://www.papuansbehindbars.org/?page\_id=17 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. http://ipwp.org/parliamentarians/ [↑](#footnote-ref-9)