

## Separatism in Papua is Free-Rider of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement

### News:

Cindy Makabory, a West Papuan woman living in exile in Australia, took part in a series of 'Black Lives Matter' protests in Melbourne, Australia, on Saturday, June 6th. In her speech, Cindy talked about the incidents that happened in Papuan student dormitories in Surabaya and Yogyakarta, where Papuan students were referred to as 'monkeys'. She also spoke of the punishment received by several Papuans – including the activist Buchtar Tabuni the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) – who initiated protests against racism. *"This clearly shows the Indonesian legal system is biased and institutionally is racist against the Papuan people,"* she added.

Veronica Koman, a pro-Papuan activist and human right lawyer, in an interview with ABC, assessed that the global anti-racism movement had gained new momentum in Indonesia. According to her, who is now under the protection of Australia; the global movement has been adapted to Papua Lives Matter in Indonesia. It can be seen from the hashtag #PapuanLivesMatter which has been a trending topic on Twitter for days and used along with #BlackLivesMatter.

### Comment:

Papuan separatist groups with Western support have taken advantage of the global issue of racism to benefit their interests. They close their eyes to the fact that there is a striking difference between the issue of Papua and the racism issue in the United States. This separatist movement has become free-rider in the wave of #BlackLivesMatter protests.

Indeed, the problem of Papua is separatism which sells the issue of racism. Recent incidents in Papua showed that the separatists no longer distinguish outsiders or non-Papuans from indigenous people. At the end of May 2020, it was recorded that a civilian was shot by separatists, and he was indigenous Papuan. He was accused of possibly being a spy, however, this case could be evidence that the struggle of independent Papuan activists is not an issue of racism, but separatism. Whoever disagrees with them, he would be victimized. This also happened in the Bloody Wamena Tragedy when a young Papuan boy was burned alive after refusing to take part in a demonstration.

In the Asia Pacific region, particularly the Western Pacific, a black Melanesian racial-based group was formed, the **Melanesian Spearhead Group** (MSG). It has been intensively supported by world institutions and also major countries such as Australia and the United States so that the Melanesian trade zone would not fall under the Chinese influence. MSG has continued to seek to include Papua to be its member, and several countries such as Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands have openly supported Papua to free themselves from Indonesia. Papua, which has the largest mines in the world, has triggered the emergence of a new competition between world economic powers, especially China and the US. Ironically, in such a situation, the people of Papua as the legal owner of the natural resource wealth, are

not in a position as decision-makers. This is also due to the attitude of the Indonesian authorities who implement the pro-corporation capitalist economy, for example, serving the American mining firm, Freeport McMoRan in Papua, thus exacerbating the economic disparity and poverty amongst the people of Papua.

The role of Australia as an ally of the United States in the Pacific region also cannot be underestimated. Pro-Papuan activists often receive protection as well as a stage to raise their voices in Australia, for example, Cindy Makabory and Veronica Koman. The overt support of the separation of Papua came from political parties, NGOs, and academics in Australia. Indeed, the Melanesian region has priority in the line of foreign policy in terms of regional and economic security. Australia's track record of supporting separatism has also been recorded in the separation of East Timor from Indonesia two decades ago. Ironically, Australia's foreign policy which takes a stand in favor of indigenous people to self-determination is in contrast to its domestic politics. Australia has a lot of systemic racist policies towards indigenous Australians who have racial similarities with Papua, i.e. the Aborigines.

If we pay close attention, we can find a pattern that the struggle of race is used only as a foreign political instrument by the Western countries, and ironically there is rottenness within their own country that smells increasingly stinging. This rottenness is inseparable from the harrowing crime of capitalism from its very core. Yet strangely, they continue to point out the Muslim countries, including Indonesia with the case of Papua. Thus, it is clear that racism has been used as a political tool to divide the Islamic world so that Western countries could gain political benefits. However, they forget to look in the mirror of themselves that show their true selves of hypocrisy and bloody history as a result of "the white supremacy" idea. This very idea has become the driving wheel of black slavery in the Western colonial era and has become the first engine of capitalism in Western countries.

This false idea has been challenged by the teachings of Islam since centuries ago and even has been uprooted by Islam. The Prophet (saw) classified racist attitudes as ignorance, this was reflected in his warning to Abu Dhar (ra) for calling Bilal bin Rabah (ra) as a "black person". In Southeast Asia four centuries ago, the idea of white supremacy was challenged by the principle of Islamic leadership in the legend of Muslim heroism in the Southern Philippines. In 1521, the Portuguese-born Spanish explorer Ferdinand Magellan landed on the Mactan Islands. His story began in racist diplomacy as the typical approach of Western invaders, where Magellan wrote to King Mactan (Muslim Sultan of the Philippines) to submit and surrender: *"On behalf of God, I ask you to surrender yourself and we, the descendants of civilized white races, are more worthy of power over this country."* Sultan Mactan responded to Magellan's letter: *"إن الدين لله وإن الإله الذي أعبد هو إله جميع البشر على اختلاف ألوانهم"* *"Truly this religion (Islam) belongs to Allah, the God whom I worship is a God for all different human skin colors."* This Magellan racist diplomacy ended in a battle won by the Muslims, and Magellan died at the hands of a Muslim General named Datu Lapu-Lapu.

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