

September 2006

Key West Papuans in Australia

Visit to highlight asylum seeker concerns and dangers of Australia-Indonesia security treaty scheduled to be signed in December 2006.



Two key former politicians from West Papua will visit Australia in September 2006.

Following Indonesia's invasion of West Papua in the 1960s, a sham referendum called the 'Act of Free Choice' was held in 1969 under UN supervision.

Indonesia selected 1022 people to vote and, under threat, they nominated for West Papua to remain with Indonesia.

Former West Papuan politicians Willem Zonggonau and Clemens Runawery witnessed the sham referendum and were then arrested by Australian officials under Indonesian direction in 1969.

Willem and Clemens tried to travel to New York in May '69 to protest against the conduct of the United Nations and the fraudulent nature of the 'referendum'. But they were prevented from getting there.

While transiting through Papua New Guinea, then under Australian control, they were arrested and detained by Australian officials at the request of the Indonesian government. The men carried testimonies from many West Papuan leaders calling for independence, but they were prohibited from leaving PNG by plane.

Willem and Clemens will be in Australia voicing concerns about the treatment and safety of West Papua asylum seekers and the consequences of a proposed new security treaty between Australia and Indonesia. The treaty is currently being negotiated behind closed doors and is scheduled to be signed in December 2006.

Willem Zonggonau and Clemens Runawery are now living in exile in PNG and will be in Australia speaking to academics, politicians and the public about the plight of West Papua.

Church estimates are that 100,000 West Papuans have died since the Indonesian military invaded in 1962.

Further information: Ben Oquist 0419 70 40 95 or freewestpapua.com.au