

# Humanitarian impacts of continuing conflict in the Papua provinces

## OVERVIEW

Between January–September 2024, several spikes in armed conflict in the six Papua provinces of Indonesia aggravated the humanitarian needs of communities, particularly IDPs, in this already marginalised region. Fighting primarily occurred between Indonesian security forces and the West Papua National Liberation Army (Tentara Pembebasan Nasional Papua Barat or TPNPB) (WCC 30/09/2024; HRM 19/09/2024; The Jakarta Post 22/04/2024). In May, the UN Human Rights Committee expressed concern regarding the impact of increasing violence on civilians, including displacement, death, and injury (UNHRC 03/05/2024).

Minimal humanitarian and media access severely limits available information on IDPs and their needs in Papua. Indonesia has denied UN agencies access to Papua since 2018 (HRW 18/09/2024; WACC 24/11/2023; ULMWP 22/01/2024). In September 2024, researchers estimated that the current conflict had brought the total number of IDPs in the region to nearly 80,000 (WCC 30/09/2024; HRM 19/09/2024). The UN also estimates that between December 2018 and March 2022, increased violence in Papua displaced between 60,000–100,000 people (OHCHR 01/03/2022).

### About this report

**Aim:** this report highlights developments in the conflict in Papua in 2024, which indicate worsening humanitarian needs among affected communities. The report emphasises significant humanitarian access constraints and response gaps and examines the outlook in the coming months.

**Methodology and limitations:** this report is based on a secondary data review of publicly available sources. Severe access constraints limit information on humanitarian needs in Papua by preventing UN agencies, many INGOs, and media sources from entering the region. Intimidation and threats also discourage community sources from reporting on the humanitarian situation. At the same time, there are allegations that the Government on different levels sponsors information providers that spread disinformation about the conflict and human rights in Papua (HRW 18/09/2024; WACC 24/11/2023).

Information on the situation of IDPs following specific violent incidents in 2024 is also highly limited. Where no incident-specific information is available, this report draws on a study convened by the Bishop's Conference of Indonesia, the West Papua Council of Churches, and the Fellowship of Churches in Indonesia, which is based on July–August interviews with 70 indigenous Papuan IDPs (HRM 19/09/2024). While this is a small sample size that provides indicative instead of representative results, it is the most comprehensive recent data available on IDP needs.

**Geographic scope and terminology:** this report uses the term 'Papua' to refer to the six Indonesian provinces that comprise the western half of Papua Island (the eastern half of the island is Papua New Guinea, a separate country). Before June 2022, this territory was divided into two provinces, Papua and West Papua, until the Indonesian Government divided Papua province into four provinces (Central Papua, Highland Papua, Papua, and South Papua) and split West Papua into two (West Papua and Southwest Papua) (UNGEFN 23/05/2023). While several sources cited throughout this report, including Human Rights Watch and Human Rights Monitor, refer to all six provinces as West Papua, this report uses 'Papua' to avoid confusion between the western half of Papua Island and West Papua province (HRM accessed 07/10/2024; HRW 18/09/2024).

This report cites data on indicators including health, education, and employment from the Indonesian government statistics agency, which disaggregates the former Papua and Papua Barat (West Papua) provinces, but does not include information on the new Papua provinces. Humanitarian access and information constraints

Indonesia's immigration legislation (Articles 12 and 13) authorises the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to restrict foreign nationals from accessing specific regions, including Papua, significantly restricting humanitarian and media access. A 'clearing house' under the supervision of the ministry, which also involves 18 operational units from 12 different ministries, the National Police, the State Intelligence Agency, and military intelligence, is mandated to review access applications but typically rejects or neglects to process them (HRW 18/09/2024; State Gazette of the Republic of Indonesia 05/05/2011).

Indonesian security forces often deny subnational humanitarian responders, including the Red Cross and church workers, access to conflict-affected communities in Papua (OHCHR 01/03/2022). In a small number of cases, local governments provide humanitarian support to IDPs (HRM 19/09/2024).

Map 1. Papua reference map, including four new provinces created in June 2022



Source: HRW (18/09/2024)

Indonesian journalists often refrain from discussing the situation in Papua in recognition of the significant risks associated with criticising the authorities (WACC 24/11/2023). Beginning in May 2024, there were reports of the Government enforcing regular internet shutdowns during protests and security operations in the region (UNHRC 03/05/2024). The duration and frequency of these shutdowns are unknown.

Many indigenous Papuans live in remote, mountainous parts of the island that are not accessible by road, creating significant physical access constraints (HRW 18/09/2024; PPT 04/10/2024).

## BACKGROUND TO THE CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

### The Papuan independence movement

Following Indonesia's independence from The Netherlands in 1949, The Netherlands maintained control over 'Netherlands New Guinea' (modern-day Papua). In 1961, the Dutch-supported Papuan Council announced that it was preparing Papua for independence as a self-governing territory, which would allow The Netherlands to maintain a degree of influence. This prompted Indonesia to launch a military incursion into Papua in 1962. The US subsequently brokered the New York Agreement between Indonesia and The Netherlands, which mandated a brief period of UN supervision in Papua followed by Indonesian control over preparations for a self-determination referendum. Indonesia, which performed security and other administrative functions in West Papua from 1963 onwards, began to arrest and exile pro-Papuan independence activists. In response, the umbrella Free Papua Movement (Organisasi Papua Merdeka or OPM) was formed in 1965, with the TPNPB as its armed wing. In 1969, Indonesia presided over a referendum based on the votes of only around 1,000 Papuans (less than 0.001% of Papua's estimated 800,000 inhabitants), who were selected by Indonesian authorities. Pro-independence Papuans rejected the referendum result, which did not favour independence (ACLEd 05/10/2022; HRW 18/09/2024; The Diplomat 26/04/2024; Jacobin 26/05/2024).

The Papuan independence movement has continued since the referendum, primarily expressed through peaceful protest, which the Indonesian authorities have routinely met with arbitrary arrest, a disproportionate use of force, and other forms of violence and human rights abuse. These include violence against non-Papuan Indonesian supporters of independence, who have been particularly active in a Papuan Lives Matter movement since around 2013 (HRW 18/09/2024; The Diplomat 26/04/2024; Jacobin 26/05/2024).

### Armed conflict until 2018

The TPNPB has pursued low-level armed conflict since around 1965 (ACLEd 05/10/2022; HRW 18/09/2024). The TPNPB historically posed little threat to the Indonesian State because of its decentralised structure, which was prone to factional fighting. Its operations were primarily confined to low-level attacks on Indonesian security forces (ACLEd 05/10/2022).

Under President Soeharto's Administration from 1967–1998, Indonesian security forces carried out several military campaigns targeting both the TPNPB and unarmed pro-independence Papuans. The total number of Papuan casualties during this period is unknown because of significant access restrictions. Military operations in the region have continued

throughout the 21st century under various presidents (HRW 18/09/2024). The military has been accused of extrajudicially killing and engaging in the enforced disappearance of indigenous Papuans throughout these campaigns, with only a few cases subject to investigation and accountability by 2024 (UNHRC 03/05/2024).

## DRIVERS OF INCREASED CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

### Discriminatory social, political, and economic structures in Papua

The estimated two million Papuan people in Indonesia are ethnically Melanesian, primarily practise Christianity, and often live according to indigenous Papuan traditions and customs. This makes them an ethnic and religious minority in Indonesia, where they have been subject to racist stereotypes and policies. These include direct and indirect discrimination in the housing market, employment, justice system, education and healthcare systems, and other services and markets (HRW 18/09/2024; Jacobin 11/03/2023).

A government transmigration policy from 1964–1999, described by then-President Soeharto's administration as a 'civilising influence', supported the move of nearly 80,000 non-Papuan settlers to Papua, displacing indigenous Papuans from their land. Areas of Papua wherein non-Papuans have settled, generally in more accessible coastal areas of the island, have consistently received better services and economic opportunities than indigenous Papuan communities in the mountains. Papua's extensive natural resource industry has since encouraged the further migration of non-Papuans, who receive disproportionately better economic benefits from the industry (HRW 18/09/2024; PPT 04/10/2024).

In June 2022, the Government of Indonesia divided Papua and West Papua into additional provinces, including Central, Highlands, South, and Southwest Papua, claiming that this would facilitate governance and improve service provision. Papuan and non-Papuan critics, however, observed that the creation of new provinces would allow Indonesia to increase both its administrative and military presence, undermining Papuan independence demands and potentially instigating conflict (UNGEFN 03/05/2023; Lowy Institute 28/04/2022; Reuters 30/06/2022).

### Changes in TPNPB aims and methods

Violence has escalated and remained high in Papua since 2018, when the TPNPB announced a more coordinated insurgency effort. In this announcement, the group committed to protecting civilians but also announced that it would target security and other government officials and employees of public infrastructure companies and foreign corporations (ACLEDD 05/10/2022; HRW 18/09/2024). Since then, the TPNPB has significantly increased its targeting of

civilians living in Papua, primarily non-Papuans, including teachers and healthcare workers. This has prompted condemnation from non-violent Papuan independence activists (ACLEDD 05/10/2022; CNN 06/03/2022; Suara Papua 27/08/2021).

In 2018, the TPNPB increasingly began to use firearms rather than more basic, non-explosive weapons, contributing to a rise in sustained battles with Indonesian security forces. The TPNPB has also expanded its area of operations outside Puncak Jaya and Mimika regencies, Central province, and Lanny Jaya regency, Highland province, where they have traditionally focused activities, increasing operations in regencies including Intan Jaya and Puncak, Central province, and Yahukimo, Highlands province (ACLEDD 05/10/2022).

In April 2021, Indonesia declared the TPNPB a terrorist organisation after it killed the head of the State Intelligence Agency in Papua province. Activists were concerned that this designation could be used to suppress peaceful calls for independence (ACLEDD 05/10/2022). Violence, including civilian casualties, increased further after the designation (OHCHR 01/03/2022).

### Increasing security force presence and use of violence

Since 2018, Indonesian security forces have increased their presence and activities in Papua. Besides holding operations against the TPNPB, security forces have arbitrarily detained, tortured, disappeared, and committed conflict-related sexual violence, including rape, against Papuan civilians and non-Papuans who support independence (HRW 18/09/2024; Jacobin 11/03/2023; ACLEDD 05/10/2022). The TPNPB also accuse the Indonesian military of indiscriminate aerial attacks, which increase the risk of civilian casualties (The Jakarta Post 14/04/2024).

In their campaigns against the TPNPB, Indonesian security forces have been accused of racially profiling young indigenous Papuan men and indiscriminately targeting indigenous Papuans involved in peaceful pro-independence protests (HRW 18/09/2024; Jacobin 11/03/2023; ACLEDD 05/10/2022). This includes the Papuan Lives Matter protests of 2019–2020, when both Papuan and non-Papuan activists staged peaceful demonstrations against discrimination in the region. A minority of protests culminated in riots, arson attacks, and violence between Papuan and non-Papuan protesters on one side and security forces on the other. Some instances also saw violence between Papuans and non-Papuan settlers. Between 29 September and 7 October alone, 35 people were killed and 8,000 were displaced. At least 22 people were convicted of treason for involvement in the protests (HRW 07/10/2019 and 18/09/2024). Security forces also used disproportionate force against protesters opposing the 2022 division of Papua and West Papua into additional provinces (ACLEDD 05/10/2022).

Violence has escalated further since February 2023, when the TPNPB kidnapped a civilian pilot from New Zealand who landed in Nduga regency, Highland province, where much of the TPNPB's activities were concentrated. The Indonesian military subsequently declared a 'combat alert', deploying additional troops and increasing checkpoints across Highland province. In September 2024, the pilot was released (Jacobin 11/03/2023). Between February 2023 and April 2024, Indonesia deployed around 6,800 military and police personnel across the Papua provinces (AI 30/06/2024).

## AGGRAVATING FACTORS

### Natural resource extraction, agribusiness, and land-grabbing

West Papua's territory comprises about 25% of Indonesia's landmass and is rich in natural resources, including oil, gas, copper, and gold. The economy that developed around these resources has attracted the extensive migration of non-Papuan and increased the presence of Indonesian security forces, contributing to heightened conflict and tensions with indigenous Papuans. Communities have reported that Indonesian military violence is increasingly intense around mines and other natural resource extraction sites, which the TPNPB also targets (PPT 04/10/2024; Eichhorn 23/02/2022). For example, in April 2024, security forces killed two TPNPB leaders after a TPNPB attack on a gold panning facility near the large Grasberg gold mine. An unspecified number of people in surrounding villages fled the fighting (VOA 07/04/2024). In 2023, the TPNPB killed an Indonesian soldier near a mine in Intan Jaya regency, Central Papua province. Indonesian security forces retaliated by attacking community members opposed to the mine, killing at least four civilians, beating and torturing others, burning down around 30 homes, and displacing around 3,000 people (PPT 04/10/2024).

Military-supported agricultural projects to build rice and sugar plantations in Papua have also increased social tensions and the deprivation of surrounding communities. The projects have been accompanied by reports of private investors seizing land from indigenous Papuan communities, with a particular spike in land grabbing reported from April–June 2024 (WCC 30/09/2024; Mongabay 03/10/2024). There is a risk of this causing violent conflict over land, potentially with military involvement from new battalions that have been established to oversee the projects (RFA 10/02/2024).

Past natural resource extraction and agribusiness projects in Papua have contaminated drinking water sources and destroyed land used for staple subsistence crops, such as sago, and fisheries in regencies including Intan Jaya, Jayapura, Maybrat, Merauke, Mimika, Paniai, and Sorong. This has a significant impact on the livelihoods and food security of many indigenous Papuans reliant on subsistence crops, decreasing their capacity to cope with displacement, restricted movement, and other conflict impacts (Jacobin 11/03/2023; TBP 17/05/2023).

### Major violent incidents in 2024 involving Indonesian security forces or the TPNPB

Armed conflict and violence have continued to affect civilian lives and infrastructure throughout 2024. While there is insufficient information available to provide a comprehensive list, large-scale events in the last six months include the following.

Early June: on an unspecified date in early June, armed clashes between the TPNPB and Indonesian security forces in Agandugume and Oneri districts, Puncak regency, Central Papua province, displaced around 500 households. The fighting occurred in response to the Government's decision to build logistics warehouses in the area despite community opposition. By mid-September, the IDPs had not returned to their villages because of active armed conflict (HRM 19/09/2024).

14 June: security forces raided 15 villages in Bibida and Paniai Timur districts, Paniai regency, Central Papua province, and engaged in combat with the TPNPB. The raid occurred in reprisal for the 11 June killing of a civilian by the TPNPB in Paniai Timur district. One source estimated that between 5,000–7,500 people from the indigenous Moni and Mee tribes in 15 villages fled, mostly to churches within the area (HRM 17/06/2024 and 19/09/2024). Another source cited estimates of between 250–574 people fleeing Bibida, although it is unclear whether the source refers to Bibida district or just Bibida village (Benar News 19/06/2024). By the end of July, an estimated 2,500 IDPs had returned home. The whereabouts and needs of the remaining IDPs were unknown by October (HRM 19/09/2024).

9 August: aerial and mortar attacks near Kisor village in Maybrat regency, Southwest Papua province, hit 11 houses and displaced around 50 existing IDPs, who had been living in nearby forests since September 2021 (HRM 19/09/2024).

15 August: Indonesian security forces clashed with protesters in Nabire, the capital of Central Papua province. The security forces arrested 95 protesters and fired tear gas and rubber bullets on others, injuring at least one. Non-Papuan Indonesians, who identified as Warga Nusantara (Archipelago Citizens), armed with iron bars, wood, and machetes attempted to block the Papuan protesters but did not attack them (Benar News 16/08/2024).

## CRISIS IMPACTS

Where possible, this section details crisis impacts from the major violent incidents in 2024 highlighted above. It also draws on information from other smaller-scale incidents in 2024 that had impacts on specific sectors, for example by forcing the closure of health centres. There are significant information gaps in all of these incidents.

### Displacement and shelter

While there is minimal information on IDPs displaced in Maybrat, Paniai, and Puncak regencies between June–August 2024, it appears that many sheltered in churches, with relatives, or in the forest. They likely experienced poor shelter conditions, which are common to IDP sites in Papua. A July–August survey of 70 IDPs across Papua found that respondents had been displaced for an average of three years, one to two years of which were spent hiding in forests. Around two-thirds of the respondents reported constantly relocating or residing outdoors, in tents, or under tarpaulins (HRM 19/09/2024). Shelters in the forest and rural areas of Papua typically have no access to basic services and experience severe overcrowding (WACC 24/11/2023; OHCHR 01/03/2022).

Many of the IDPs in Maybrat, Paniai, and Puncak remained displaced for at least one month because of security-related fears, which also prevented 70% of the IDPs surveyed from July–August from returning to their home villages. Around 40% of these IDPs had received direct threats from conflict parties (HRM 19/09/2024). The increased seizure of indigenous Papuan land by private investors and non-Papuan migrants from other parts of Indonesia also impedes IDP return (WACC 24/11/2023; Mongabay 03/10/2024).

This conflict-induced displacement aggravates pre-existing shelter needs in Papua. In 2023, the government statistics agency estimated that less than 30% of households in former Papua province (the lowest rate among any province in Indonesia) and 57% in former West Papua had access to adequate housing, compared with a national average of over 63% (BPS accessed 08/10/2024).

### Protection

As noted above, Indonesian security force and TPNPB violence routinely poses protection risks for civilians, who are caught in crossfire or directly targeted on the basis of perceived affiliation with either conflict party (HRW 18/09/2024; Jacobin 11/03/2023; ACLED 05/10/2022). The growing presence of military checkpoints and posts in and near civilian settlements has increased protection risks and movement restrictions for Papuan villagers (HRM 19/09/2024; AI 02/02/2024).

Boys and male youth are particularly vulnerable to arbitrary detention on suspicion of being involved with the TPNPB, often followed by torture, disappearance, or killing (HRW 18/09/2024; The Guardian 26/09/2023). For example, in March 2024, video footage emerged of Indonesian soldiers torturing a young Papuan man arrested in February on suspicion of planning a TPNPB attack with two other men. The police subsequently found no evidence to support these suspicions. Impunity for incidents such as these is widespread, with the rare prosecution of the soldiers responsible. Following the February 2024 incident, the Indonesian Government claimed it would take action against 13 suspects. No further developments had been reported by October 2024 (HRW 02/04/2024 and 18/09/2024; HRM 22/03/2024).

Non-Papuan workers in Papua and both Papuan and non-Papuan workers associated with the state, including teachers and healthcare workers, are also at particularly high risk of TPNPB violence (ACLED 05/10/2022).

There are recent reports of conflict-related sexual violence used against both men and women in Papua, although information on specific cases is scarce, likely because of stigma and fear of reprisal for reporting incidents (The Guardian 26/09/2023; LSE 21/08/2019; HRW 18/09/2024). Gender-based violence, particularly intimate partner violence (IPV), may also be common in IDP sites because of crowding and intense stress, both of which increase IPV risk (AJAR 03/04/2019; HRM 19/09/2024).

### Access to healthcare

Armed conflict in 2024 has compromised healthcare access across Papua, contributing to decreased numbers of operational facilities, particularly in Highland province. 87% of the IDPs surveyed from July–August reported lack of healthcare access to be among their biggest difficulties (ECOSOC 14/03/2024; HRM 19/09/2024). For example, in May 2024, armed clashes between Indonesian security forces and the TPNPB in Paniai regency, Central Papua province, led to the closure of the only general hospital in the regency. Security forces occupied the hospital's third floor, forcing staff and patients to leave. It is unknown whether the hospital had reopened by October 2024 (HRM 27/05/2024; HRW 18/09/2024). Until July, security force personnel also occupied the health centre in Bibida district, Central Papua (HRM 19/09/2024).

These incidents compound barriers to healthcare posed by severe supply and staff shortages, which forced the closure of additional Papuan hospitals between 2023–2024. For example, in May 2024, a mental health hospital in Jayapura, Papua province, announced that it would close because of insufficient medication supplies. The health centre in Nduga, Highlands province, which hosts a majority (over 55,000) of Papua's IDPs, closed for an indefinite period in December 2023, also because of inadequate supplies (HRM 27/05/2024).

and 21/12/2023; HRW 18/09/2024). Racial discrimination and bureaucratic barriers, including the requirement to complete a certification process in other parts of Indonesia, prevent Papuan health workers from obtaining employment. This contributes to a shortage of staff with the language skills required to effectively treat indigenous Papuan patients (HRM 27/05/2024; HRW 18/09/2024).

Many villages outside regency capitals in Papua, which is also where armed conflict is concentrated, lack the roads required for the easy transport of healthcare professionals and patients, requiring people to walk for long periods to obtain care (HRM 27/05/2024; HRW 18/09/2024). This likely poses a particularly high barrier to healthcare for conflict-affected people with disabilities, older people, pregnant and lactating women, and young children.

These factors have contributed to the former Papua province having the lowest access to basic health services in Indonesia in 2024, at an estimated 32% by May. The former West Papua province had the third-lowest access rate, at 65%, compared with a national average of over 80% (BPS accessed 08/10/2024).

## Health problems

Lack of access to healthcare, shelter, and other basic services has caused or aggravated existing health conditions for communities in Papua, particularly IDPs. Between early 2019 and mid-2024, a subnational human rights organisation documented the death of nearly 200 IDPs from “conditions during displacement” (PPT 04/10/2024). Another documented the death of nearly 900 IDPs between December 2018 and August 2024 (HRM 19/09/2024). While these sources do not provide precise information on the causes of death, these are likely linked to conflict- and health-related issues. Waterborne and vector-borne diseases, such as malaria, are common in Papua, which was estimated to account for over 80% of Indonesia’s malaria cases in February 2024 (WHO 26/02/2024; HRM 19/09/2024). Malaria and other communicable diseases can spread quickly in overcrowded IDP sites with minimal access to basic services, including WASH facilities, and a lack of medication to treat these diseases.

## Livelihoods, food security, and nutrition

Displacement and conflict have deprived Papuans of access to their land and natural resources, including subsistence crops and fisheries. As over 99% of Papuans are informally employed in agriculture, prolonged separation from their land has a significant impact on livelihoods, with 81% of the IDPs surveyed from July–August 2024 reporting difficulties in accessing livelihoods (HRM 19/09/2024; BPS accessed 08/10/2024). Separation from their land and gardens also affects food security, with nearly 100% of the surveyed IDPs reporting

inadequate access to food (HRM 19/09/2024; BPS accessed 08/10/2024). Likely because of insufficient food, in March 2022, severe malnutrition was reported in unspecified Papuan displacement sites (OHCHR 01/03/2022).

Increasing military presence in Papuan villages also affects livelihoods, with reports in 2024 that security force personnel occupying villages in Paniai regency imposed restrictions on when villagers could access and work in their gardens (HRM 19/09/2024). At the same time, members of the TPNPB and OPM have been accused of seizing crops and livestock from the communities where they are active (Benar News 19/06/2024).

Papua already has the highest food insecurity in Indonesia, which classified most Papuan regencies as susceptible or very susceptible (on a scale of very resistant to very susceptible) to food insecurity in 2023. This classification is based on three factors: food availability, access to food distribution networks, and food intake. Highland province, where many IDPs are concentrated, is among the worst affected provinces (CNA 11/09/2024).

## Education

By September 2024, it was estimated that around 90% of IDP children in Papua had no access to education. The increasing military occupation of schools also affects the education of non-displaced children. In some communities, particularly in more remote parts of provinces, soldiers have begun teaching in schools in response to a lack of teachers, with many classes focused on Indonesian nationalism (HRM 19/09/2024; HRW 18/09/2024). The use of soldiers as teachers may disincentivise some parents from sending their children to schools, particularly in villages where security forces arrest, detain, restrict the movement of, and otherwise repress community members. It may also intensify conflict, with reports of the TPNPB burning schools perceived to be “indoctrinating” Papuan children against independence, further compromising access to education (ABC 11/10/2024).

These conflict impacts aggravate the pre-existing low levels of education in Papua, where primary school completion rates were among the lowest in Indonesia in 2023 – at 93% in former West Papua province and only 80% in former Papua province compared with around 98% at the national level (BPS accessed 08/10/2024).

## OUTLOOK

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In February 2024, Prabowo Subianto, who was then Indonesia's defence minister, was elected president. He is expected to assume office in October (Reuters 21/03/2024). Subianto, a former general of the Indonesian Army, has faced accusations of being involved in human rights abuse during military operations. This includes leading a 1996 operation in Papua to rescue hostages of the TPNPB, which caused civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian property (ABC 25/03/2024; HRW 18/09/2024). Subianto's presidency is likely to bring increased militarisation to Papua; during a December 2023 presidential debate, Subianto stated that he would strengthen law enforcement in the Papuan provinces, which he claimed would enhance the protection of civilians (Antara 12/12/2023). Given systematic security force abuses in Papua, this may have the opposite effect. Subianto's presidency may also foment unrest and TPNPB violence in the region, where election-related disorder and violence already occurred after the 14 February presidential election until at least the end of March, injuring at least five people and leading to the arrest of 14 others (ACLED 08/04/2024; TRIBUNnews.com 15/03/2024).

In April 2024, the Commander of the Indonesian Armed Forces announced that it would refer to the OPM by its name instead of calling it a separatist organisation or criminal group, which was its previous practice. The announcement did not distinguish between the TPNPB and the OPM, calling the OPM "gun-toting combatants" pursuing a "state within a state". Observers are concerned that referring to the OPM as armed combatants and not criminals will be used to justify the increasing militarisation of Papua (The Jakarta Post 22/04/2024).

In May 2024, the Indonesian military announced that it had requested a budget increase allowing it to better detect and retaliate against Papuan non-state armed combatants, increasing its advantage over fighters more familiar with the terrain. The increased funds would be spent on additional aircraft, sensors, and other equipment used to target the TPNPB (Benar News 19/06/2024). This supports the hypothesis that the Indonesian Government is planning to increase military operations in Papua.

In September 2024, the TPNPB released a kidnapped pilot from New Zealand who had been held hostage for nearly 18 months. Papuan activists have expressed concerns that Indonesia will capitalise on this release to launch increased operations in Papua, as security forces are no longer required to exercise care to avoid jeopardising the pilot's safety and hostage negotiations (RNZ 25/09/2024 and 26/09/2024).

Indonesia is considering the revision of Law No. 34/2004 on the military, which would expand military functions into civilian domains, including health and education in West Papua (HRM 07/06/2024 and 03/07/2023). If passed, these revisions will increase the military's role in civilian life in Papua, potentially prompting reprisals from the TPNPB and the increased abuse of the civilian population.