



West Papuans celebrate arrival of sacred water and fire, despite intimidation by Indonesian military

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A number of events took place across West Papua today to celebrate the arrival of sacred water and fire from the Freedom Flotilla.

In the port city of Marauke, a planned community event which was to be attended by 17 tribes from around the region was stymied by authorities. The head of police and five intelligence officers hand delivered a letter to one of the organisers prohibiting any ceremonies for the reception of the Freedom Flotilla. Police and intelligence officers stationed themselves around the house of the organiser this morning, preventing it from taking place.

"The town was crippled by the combined forces of navy, police, State Intelligence Agency (BIN,) Kopasus and military who monitored the movement of ordinary people and the Flotilla organisers throughout the day. Plan B was to escape in few vehicles to a safe location and travel by boat for few kilometres to a nearby beach and this is where the sacred ceremony was carried out," explained Ronnie Kareni

Jhon Wog, chairmen of the Freedom Flotilla welcoming committee and elder of the Marin Tribe in Merauke, said "In a sacred site near Marauke, I released a canoe to sail out to meet the Flotilla boat as a symbol of connecting the spirit of our ancestors. Thank God for Uncle Kevin Buzzacott, who already brought our ancestral spirit back to reconnect us with the land and hope for our struggle for independence."

In nearby Fak Fak, an estimated 400-600 people undertook a long march to highlight ongoing human rights abuses against the people of West Papua. The arrival of the water and fire was also celebrated by hundreds yesterday in Manokwari with traditional dances and prayer.

"The people of West Papua express our gratitude to the Indigenous Elders, Kevin Buzzacott, human rights activists, musicians, artists, and others on the Freedom Flotilla who have raised their voices for peace and justice in West Papua," said West Papuan activist Awom Eliezer.

The sacred water from Lake Eyre in central Australia and ashes from Aboriginal tent embassies had been delivered by the Freedom Flotilla in a clandestine cultural exchange between indigenous elders of Australia and West Papua. They will be passed from tribe to tribe throughout West Papua to spread the message of hope and continue the struggle for freedom.

The crackdown by authorities today follows the events of the 28th of August, where four people were arrested and charged with treason for raising the banned Morning Star flag after a prayer meeting in support of the Freedom Flotilla.

For further information and comment, please contact: Ronny Kareni +61 401 222 177
media@freedomflotillawestpapua.org