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July 31, 2010

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Eni F.H. Faleomavaega
Chairman
Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific
and the Global Environment

Donald M. Payne
Chairman
Subcommittee on Africa and
Global Health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Washington, D.C.

**CONGRESSMAN FALEOMAVAEGA AND
CONGRESSMAN PAYNE SPEARHEAD EFFORT IN
U.S. CONGRESS CALLING UPON THE OBAMA
ADMINISTRATION TO MAKE WEST PAPUA ONE OF
ITS HIGHEST PRIORITIES**

The Chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment, Rep. Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, and Chairman Donald M. Payne of the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health have spearheaded an effort in Congress calling upon President Obama to “make West Papua one of the highest priorities of the Administration.”

As a result of their efforts, 50 Members of the U.S. Congress signed a letter to the President stating that there is strong indication that the Indonesian government has committed genocide against the Papuans. West Papua is the half of New Guinea that was invaded by Indonesia in 1962.

While Papuan leaders have repeatedly tried to engage in dialogue with the Indonesian government, dialogues have failed to produce concrete results and Papuan leaders are now calling for an International Dialog. In this context, signatories of the letter have asked President

Obama to meet with the people of West Papua during his upcoming trip to Indonesia in November.

Many Members who signed the letter are members of the Congressional Black Caucus. The signatories include men and women who fought for civil rights in America in the 1960s. Younger politicians have also joined this initiative to support the people of West Papua who have suffered long enough.

In addition to the Congressional Black Caucus, many other American leaders who are long-time advocates of human rights joined this request to the President of the United States, including members of the Hispanic Caucus. The last remaining member of the Kennedy family in Congress, Rep. Patrick Kennedy from Rhode Island, also signed the letter to President Obama.

The letter to the President suggests that slow motion genocide has been taking place in West Papua and reviews findings by human rights organizations and scholars who have conducted extensive research about crimes against humanity and genocide by Indonesian security forces. “Genocide is usually difficult to document since leaders are often reluctant to state their intention to destroy another nation, race, or ethnic group,” Members of Congress wrote. “Even still, in 2007 Col. Burhanuddin Siagian, who was then the local regional commander (DANREM) said, ‘If I encounter elements that use government facilities, but still are betraying the nation, I will destroy them.’”

According to international agreements, other nations are legally obligated to intervene when a genocide is in process and Members of Congress remain hopeful that President Obama and the U.S. State Department will hold Indonesia accountable. Members concluded their letter by encouraging the President to meet with the Team of 100 from West Papua during his upcoming visit, noting that President Obama has the opportunity to bring lasting change to this part of the world.

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