

## Papua Calling: Muslims calling for peace

In this video, Papuan Muslims discuss how religious and inter-tribal conflict is being created by the rapid and unequal development that is taking place in West Papua. Rather than Islam being considered a cause for conflict, these Papuans are calling on Muslims from all over the world to discuss Papua and its problems, and to be aware that the country is facing a humanitarian crisis.

The vision of the Papuan Islamic Council is to protect people and environment and to work for the peace and the dignity of the Papuan people. Sometimes the conflict in Papua is described in main stream media in terms of a conflict between Islam and Christianity. Here this claim is disputed on the grounds that Islam is a force for improving the situation of all Papuans, the majority of whom are Christian.

This video shows that religion is a complex issue in Papua, and that Islam is not just the religion of migrants. As more Papuans convert to Islam, religion will become an increasingly important issue and a cause for hope. Political action by Muslim people – Papuans and non-Papuans – against human rights abuses, environmental destruction and inequitable development will have great resonance in Indonesia and elsewhere. Claims by Christian churches, organisations and individuals are often not heard in Indonesia – the world's largest Islamic nation – and are sometimes dismissed as 'separatist' propaganda calling for independence. This video shows that people of good intent – whatever their religion – acknowledge the great problems that the Papuans are facing and that concerted action is needed to avoid a growing humanitarian crisis.

Issues: religious tolerance, Islam, conflict, unequal development

### Talking points:

- 1 What are your thoughts about Papuan people converting to Islam? What similarities do you see between Melanesian culture and Islamic values?
- 2 What role might Islam play in solving the conflicts that are in West Papua? Do you think that Papuan Muslims can act as a bridge between Papuans and non-Papuan settlers and the Indonesian government?
- 3 Do you think that it is a positive development for some Papuans to become Muslims? What is the history of the relationship between Islam and Christianity and other belief systems?

