CHAPTER II

UNDERSTANDING THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND PAPUA

This specific chapter will mainly be a description and explanation on the roles of the Catholic Church in Papua, and the historical background of Human Rights Issues in Papua. We will try to cover most of the relevant conversation and idea within this Chapter to formulate an overall idea on the Catholic Church, the current relation of the Catholic Church presence in Papua, and their standing on the ongoing human rights issues.

2.1. The Institution of the Catholic Church

To understand fully how the Catholic Church functions, we must dive within its institutional structures (see **Error! Reference source not found.**) and fully understand how vast and varies the network within this single entity of organisation. This is important to discuss and clarify because the Catholic Church, both on an international level and national level within a sovereign nation, is a single continuous hierarchical structure with a direct link with one another. This is where it gets unique, the Holy See functions and acts not only as state, but also a church-state. It derives its sovereignty from what scholars would define as “spiritual sovereignty” (Troy, 2008; Vallier, 1971). Through the Customary International Law perspective, the Catholic Church is treated as a unique actor (*sui generis*) because it is treated as juridical equal to states but operates based on "spiritual sovereignty" rather than traditional territorial power (Ryngaert, 2011). The Pope within his authority as a spiritual sovereign, has the

capacity to formulate and conceive religious territory (diocese) and the appointment of bishop for such diocese wherever the necessity arises (Vallier, 1971). The Catholic Church operations and presence within a country is also limited and dictated through a concordat between the Holy See and the receiving country (Troy, 2008; Vallier, 1971). Through these concordat, the Catholic Church and in extent the Vatican is given the right to operate and interact with the populace, yet in some instances where the nation-state is "open", or doesn't overtly regulate religion and the presence of the Catholic Church then the church and the Holy See are free to operate within its capacity as a religious institution and through established diplomatic channel (Vallier, 1971). In the other hand, when a country deems the Holy See and the extent the Catholic Church as a "dangerous agent" or possible enemy of the state, the Holy See channel of communication with the internal church within a country is usually severed. This is evident through in Communist China as example, where the presence of Holy See influence in China was erased during Mao's regime, and replaced with a much more "patriotic" Catholic Church of China which were directed by the state (Mariani, 2019). This is of course a peculiarity, because the Catholic Church as a whole, must and is always linked with a full communion with the Holy See and in turn the Pope as the Vicar of Christ. Because as mandated through the Canon Law of the Church, only the Pope is the recognised head of the Catholic Church, and his flocks should follow his voice (Vallier, 1971).

We will circle back to the definition of the Local Church which is used in this research. The Local Church (interchangeable with “Local Vatican”) is a non-existent and non-specific term that will be used within this research to describe local catholic actors. According to Vallier (1971), The Catholic Church operates through four primary areas of specialisation within its global structure: diplomacy, evangelisation, governance, and pastoral care or "shepherding." Each of these roles is grounded in a relational framework. In this system, papal nuncios engage with representatives of sovereign states; curial officials, acting as the pope’s key administrators, are connected to decision-makers across the wider Church; missionary leaders concentrate on outreach to non-Catholic populations; and diocesan bishops focus on overseeing the clergy and laity within their respective regions.

Table 1

<table>
<tr><th>Areas of Specialisation</th><th>Establishment of internal authority and control</th><th>Securement of conditions for work in political system</th><th>Capture of loyalties for the church</th><th>Protection and control of church members</th></tr>
<tr><td>Internal-political</td><td rowspan="4">Papal bureaucrats</td><td></td><td rowspan="2"></td><td rowspan="3"></td></tr>
<tr><td>External-political</td><td rowspan="3">Papal nuncios</td></tr>
<tr><td>External-religious</td><td rowspan="2">Missionaries</td></tr>
<tr><td>Internal-religious</td><td>Residential bishops</td></tr>
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Source: Vallier (1971)

These four areas of specialisation categorised in Table 1 are functionally interconnected. The internal political domain, represented by curial structures, originates from the need to establish authority and governance principles across the Church. It serves as the foundation for formal power and administrative oversight. The external political sphere, managed by papal nuncios, deals with the Church's relations with political authorities and works to secure access to their territories. When these diplomatic efforts are successful, attention shifts to the external religious sphere, where missionaries concentrate on religious outreach. Effective missionary engagement, in turn, creates a demand for growth in the internal religious domain, which is overseen by residential bishops and local pastors (Vallier, 1971).

According to Randriamanantena (2020) (explained in Table 2 below), The Catholic Church could be divided into two between the "Global Vatican" comprising the Pope, the Roman Curia, various dicastery, and envoys to international organizations, and the "Local Vatican." The "Local Vatican" encompasses the set of actors constituting the Vatican's diplomacy at the local, national level. These entities operate within specific national contexts, engaging with local societies and governments, and form a critical component of the Vatican's global reach and influence. The primary components of the Local Vatican, as detailed in the research, are Apostolic Nuncios, Bishops' Conferences, and various other local institutions including religious congregations and lay movements.

Table 2

Global Vatican Actors	
The Pope	As the Head of The Catholic Church
The Vatican Secretary of State	Considered as the second-high ranking official in the Vatican after the Pope. Oversees various transnational organisations.
The Head of the Secretariat for Relations with other States	Oversees the diplomatic relations with other nations.
Heads of specific "Dicastaries"	Sort of Super-minister, combining various units within the church.
Papal Envoys	Stationed at various missions in countries.
Vatican Ambassadors/Permanent observers	Acts as formal representatives of the Vatican in International Organisations.
Local Vatican Actors	
Local Nuncio	An Archbishop stationed as the head of the Vatican diplomatic mission in a country.
Bishop Conference/Episcopal Conference	A forum constituted by all the Catholic bishops in a particular country.
Local branch of Catholic organisations	Various Catholic religious orders such as Jesuits and diocesan commissions, or lay movements.

Source: Randriamanantena (2020)

These local Vatican actors are mainly categorised into 3 categories.

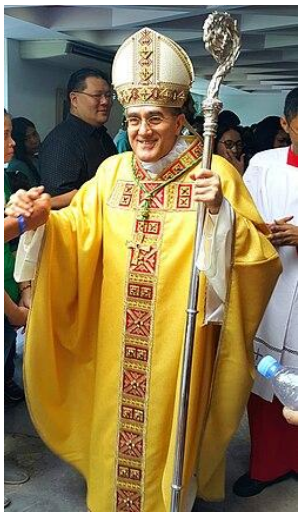


Figure 1

Apostolic Nuncio to Jakarta
2017-2025
Mgr. Pierro Pippo

Through the Papal Bull *Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum (1969)* ***Apostolic Nuncios*** as represented in figure 1, are central figures within the Local Vatican. The local "Nuncio," typically an Archbishop, serves as the head of the Vatican's diplomatic mission in a specific country, functioning as a Papal Ambassador. Their role, however, extends beyond purely diplomatic functions; they also have a religious mission to the Catholic Church within the host state. This dual capacity, as both diplomat and pastoral figure, grants them a unique position (Barbato, 2013; Gaetan, 2021; Randriamanantena, 2020).

The Nuncio's dual affiliation with both the Global and Local Vatican is particularly significant. It makes them a critical interface, translating central policies from Rome into local realities and, conversely, channelling local concerns, information, and nuances back to the central authorities. This "double status" allows the nuncio to be in "close touch with the situation and the problems of the country at the grass roots level", making them more than just ambassadors but active participants in the local church's life and its interaction with the state (Randriamanantena, 2020; Vallier, 1971).

Bishops' Conferences represent another vital component of the Local Vatican. A Bishops' Conference is defined as the "periodic assembly of the bishops of a nation or a region for the purpose of addressing pastoral issues affecting those nations". It comprises all Catholic bishops (exemplified in figure 2) within a particular country and is typically headed by a President elected by the member bishops. According to Canon Law, it constitutes the "highest authority at the local level" within the Church's structure in that nation (Randriamanantena, 2020).

Figure 2

Archbishops and Bishops of Indonesia along with the Apostolic Nuncio to Jakarta

Source: KWI (2025)

The formal recognition and empowerment of Bishops' Conferences, particularly after the Second Vatican Council, transformed them from primarily administrative bodies into significant national actors. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was a pivotal moment, granting these conferences formal recognition and increased power. This fostered a "less monarchical governing structure" within the Church and gave national bishops "an unprecedented degree

of autonomy from Rome in formulating national church policy". This autonomy allowed them to respond directly to local societal needs and political contexts. Influential Episcopal Conferences, such as the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), have consequently become deeply involved in both domestic politics and foreign policy on critical international issues. Examples like the USCCB's engagement following the El Salvador massacre or the role of Latin American bishops in mediating civil wars demonstrate their capacity to take strong, independent stances. This illustrates that their influence is derived not only from their connection to Rome but also significantly from their national legitimacy and collective moral authority, making them key players in shaping both local church life and national discourse (Vallier, 1971). Pope Paul VI further solidified their status through the papal document *Ecclesiae Sanctae* (1966), which placed the Episcopal Conference hierarchically between individual diocesan bishops and the Apostolic See in Rome but doesn't necessarily cut of the direct relationship between each bishop with the Pope.

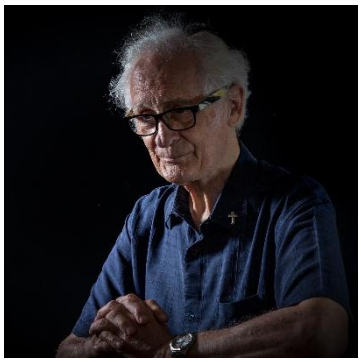


Figure 3

Father Franz Magnis-Suseno, S.J.
One of the many Jesuits priests who has done works in various fields in Indonesia

Beyond nuncios and Bishops' Conferences, the Local Vatican also includes a diverse array of other institutions. This category encompasses religious congregations (see figure 3 and 4), such as the Jesuits, which operate at the local level but often possess transnational ties, and local branches of

transnational lay organizations. Examples of such lay movements mentioned include the International Young Christian Workers (IYCW), the International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS-Pax Romana), and the International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs (ICMICA-Pax Romana) (Randriamanantena, 2020; Troy, 2008; Vallier, 1971).

Figure 4

Franciscan Friars, one of the many Catholic orders and lay organisations that operates in Indonesia

The Second Vatican Council also played a role in enhancing the engagement of these lay organizations. These diverse local institutions, particularly lay organizations and specialized religious centres, function as niche diplomatic actors. They leverage specific expertise, be it in social research, humanitarian aid, or youth mobilisation, to influence policy and contribute to peace-making in ways that formal episcopal structures might not. The dissertation of Randriamanantena provides examples such as the CIAS *(Centro de Investigacion y Accion Social)*, run by Argentinian Jesuits, which actively

participated in the debates surrounding the Beagle Channel conflict by providing social reflection and research (Mirow, 2004). Similarly, Caritas-Cuba and the Varela Institute played roles in the U.S.-Cuba rapprochement through humanitarian work and cultural promotion, respectively. These entities are described as "structures of grace" that engage in global justice activities, which can have significant implications for domestic politics and foreign policy. Their specialized focus and often transnational connections allow them to operate effectively in specific areas. Their values-based approach can resonate differently than formal diplomatic overtures, and their engagement in "global justice activities" suggests an ability to address root causes of conflict or advocate for systemic change, complementing the more direct mediation efforts of bishops or nuncios. Thus, they represent a vital, often under-recognized, layer of the Vatican's influence network, capable of targeted interventions and long-term societal engagement.

2.2. The Catholic Church as an Institution at the National Level

The institutional identity of the Catholic Church in Indonesia is a narrative of strategic adaptation, evolving from a marginalized colonial mission into a foundational pillar of the modern pluralist state. This transformation began in the 16th century with the arrival of Portuguese explorers and the seminal missionary efforts of St. Francis Xavier in the Moluccas, which established the first Catholic enclaves (Steenbrink, 2003). However, the subsequent dominance of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) led to two centuries of systemic

suppression, where Catholicism was effectively criminalized in favour of Dutch Calvinism. The modern "resurrection" of the Church was only made possible in the early 19th century through Napoleonic-era reforms, which allowed for the formal return of clergy. The defining institutional shift occurred in the early 20th century under the "Ethical Policy," as Jesuit missionaries like Fr. Frans van Lith, SJ, pivoted toward high-level education in Central Java. By fostering an indigenous intellectual elite, the Church ensured its place within the burgeoning nationalist movement (Steenbrink, 2003). This alignment was personified by Mgr. Albertus Soegijapranata, whose revolutionary-era leadership established the paradigm of being "100% Catholic, 100% Indonesian," effectively de-linking the faith from its colonial origins and embedding it within the nascent Republic's identity (Armada, 2023; Rihadiani & Ikaputra, 2023).

In the contemporary era, the Church maintains a social stance characterised by high institutional centralisation and a staunch defence of the Pancasila state ideology. At the national level, the *Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia* (KWI) aka Indonesian Bishop Conference functions as the singular authoritative voice for the country's 37 dioceses, providing a unified platform for ethical and political engagement that is unique among Indonesia's minority religions (Steenbrink, 2020) (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). This internal cohesion is reinforced by the Church's distinctive diplomatic status as the only religious body in Indonesia with formal sovereign-to-sovereign ties to the Holy See (Vatican). This relationship, facilitated through the Apostolic

Nunciature in Jakarta, provides the Church with a "sovereign-adjacent" standing that allows it to participate in national and international discourse with a level of diplomatic protection and moral authority that transcends its minority status. Legally, while not having an official concordat as previously explained in Section 2.1, the Church operates as a recognized "legal subject" (*badan hukum*) through *Peraturan Pemerintah* No. 38 of 1963, a status that permits it to maintain extensive autonomous networks of landholdings and social foundations (*Yayasan*) while navigating the complex bureaucracy of a Muslim-majority state (Rozario, 2024; Steenbrink, 2020). This further enforced through the official recognition of Catholicism as one of the six religion permitted under the national ideology of Pancasila.

The influence of the Catholic Church is disproportionately large relative to its demographic footprint, which constitutes approximately 2.9% to 3% of the total population. This influence is primarily exerted through a pervasive "infrastructure of mercy" and human development. Catholic educational institutions, ranging from primary schools to elite universities, are regarded as national benchmarks for academic rigor and multicultural values, often serving a majority-Muslim student body and thus shaping the values of the broader Indonesian middle class. Similarly, Catholic healthcare networks have historically pioneered modern medical services, particularly in remote regions like East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) and Papua, where they often function as the primary provider of public goods. This institutional reach is complemented by a

sophisticated theology of inculturation, which has allowed the Church to preserve and integrate local indigenous cultures, such as Javanese aesthetics or Papuan tribal traditions, into its liturgical life, thereby positioning itself as a custodian of Indonesian heritage rather than an external cultural force (Rihadiani & Ikaputra, 2023).

Nationally, the perception of the Catholic Church by the masses and political entities is a complex synthesis of deep respect and occasional minority anxiety. The Church is widely viewed as a "loyal critic" of the state and a reliable partner in national development and interfaith dialogue, yet a firm advocate for human rights and democratic ethics. In conflict zones, particularly Papua, the Church's role as a documenter of *memoria passionis* (memory of suffering) grants it immense local legitimacy as a defender of the marginalized, even as it creates occasional friction with state security apparatuses (Campbell, 2016; Nahria et al., 2025). While rising religious populism in certain urban centres occasionally frames the Church's institutional strength with suspicion, its consistent alignment with the *Pancasila* and its proven track record in social welfare ensure its status as a vital component of Indonesia's civil society. Ultimately, the Church stands as a sophisticated minority that has traded numerical dominance for institutional excellence, maintaining a seat at the national table through its contributions to the common good and its unwavering commitment to the Indonesian national project (Jason, 2025).

2.3. The Human Rights Issues in Papua

Understanding the Human Rights Issues in Papua isn't as easy as seeing black and white, because we must look and fully understand the history of human rights and activism in Papua. The history of Papua as part of Indonesia is a long and complicated one spanning back to the Dutch colonialism. Human rights in Papua are fundamentally defined by the standards set forth in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Article 1 of both covenants establishes that all peoples possess the right to self-determination, which grants them the freedom to determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development. In the Papuan context, this foundational right was severely compromised during the 1969 *Penentuan Pendapat Rakyat* (PEPERA), or the Act of Free Choice. Rather than a democratic referendum based on universal suffrage, the Indonesian government utilized approximately 1,025 handpicked local leaders to vote on behalf of the entire population (Tebay, 2009). This process took place in an environment characterized by pervasive military intimidation and fear, leading many Papuans and international observers to view the integration as a coerced annexation that ignored the legitimate will of the people (Anderson, 2015).

The violation of civil and political rights, specifically the right to life and the security of person guaranteed under Articles 6 and 9 of the ICCPR, is a central feature of what is described as a complex topography of insecurity

(Anderson, 2015). Human right abuses in this category involve vertical violence, which includes military repression, arbitrary arrests, and the torture of individuals suspected of separatist sympathies. This insecurity has transitioned into a chronic crisis of internal displacement. Data indicates that 100 percent of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the region identify armed conflict as the primary cause of their flight, with 99 percent of these individuals being indigenous Papuans (Human Rights Monitor, 2023; KWI et al., 2024). Furthermore, the criminalization of non-violent political expression, such as raising the Morning Star flag, constitutes a direct infringement on the rights to freedom of assembly and expression. However, a significant portion of the violence in the region is horizontal in nature, involving clan conflicts and vigilantism that often result in higher casualty rates than direct combat between state forces and insurgents (Anderson, 2015). This environment of violence is maintained by a near-total absence of protective state institutions, leaving 97 percent of the displaced population in a state of paralysis, afraid to return to their original villages (KWI et al., 2024).

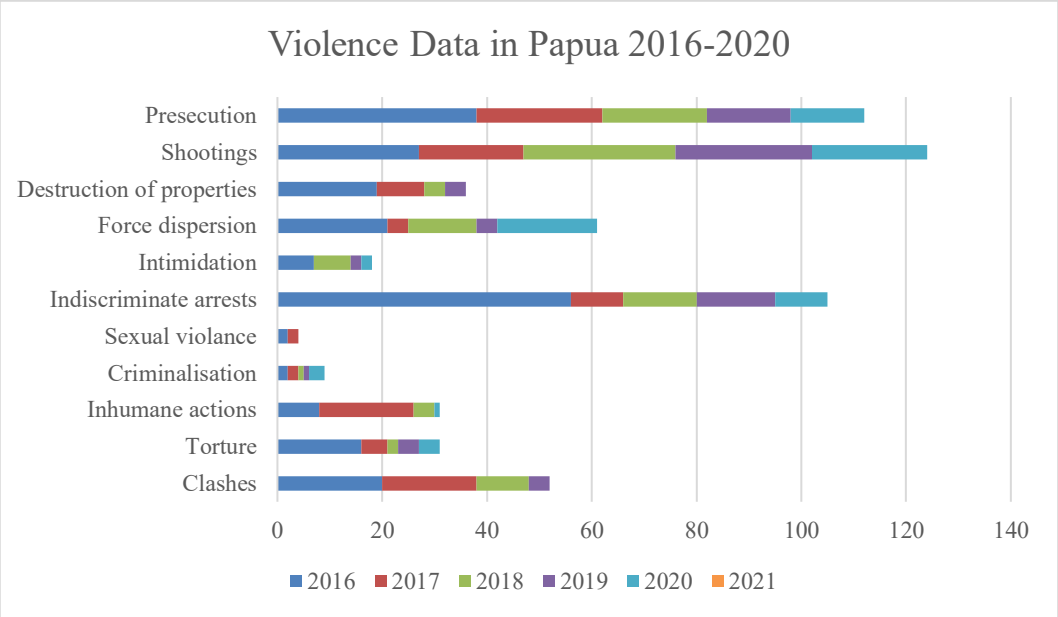
Structural violence in Papua represents a systemic violation of the ICESCR, particularly the rights to health, education, and an adequate standard of living defined in Articles 11, 12, and 13. Indigenous Papuans currently suffer from the highest mortality rates and the lowest income levels in Indonesia. This health crisis is manifested in the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the country, alongside a rapid spread of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis that the

dysfunctional health system has failed to mitigate (Anderson, 2015). Recent assessments further highlight the severity of this neglect, showing that 97 percent of displaced Papuans report having insufficient food, while 87 percent lack access to adequate medication or healthcare services (KWI et al., 2024). Similarly, the right to education is undermined by high illiteracy rates, especially in the highlands, where schools are frequently unstaffed. This collapse of education is particularly acute in displacement zones, where 74 percent of school age children are currently unable to attend classes (KWI et al., 2024). These conditions are often perceived by the local population as a form of slow-motion genocide, as the state failure to provide essential services threatens the very survival of indigenous communities (Anderson, 2015).

The underlying issues driving these human rights concerns include the failure of the 2001 Special Autonomy Law (Otonomi Khusus or Otsus) and the resulting co-optation of local elites. Instead of improving public welfare, special autonomy has largely functioned as a mechanism to distribute resource wealth and administrative positions to indigenous elites in exchange for political loyalty (Amirullah, 2025; Tebay, 2009). This strategy has created a fragile peace while alleviating the central government of its responsibility to deliver tangible health and education services to ordinary citizens (Anderson, 2015). Additionally, the constant administrative redistricting, or *pemekaran*, has allowed clans to capture government subsidies but has simultaneously fragmented and weakened rural social services. Demographic shifts caused by unregulated migration also

contribute to insecurity, as indigenous populations fear being reduced to a minority in their own ancestral lands

Table 3



Source: (KontraS, 2021)

As reported by KontraS in 2021 visualised in Table 3, a human rights activism group based in Indonesia, there are plenty of human rights violation that happened in Papua from 2016-2020. In their report from 2016-2020, KontraS noted that there were 391 cases of violence that happened in Papua ranging from shootings, intimidation, and other inhumane actions (KontraS, 2021). All these acts of violence were described by KontraS as the result of cumulative factors that made the Human Rights issues in Papua stays in a blur; among the factors mentioned by KontraS the most significant ones were the multiple interpretations

of terrorism by the State. This is notable because on the act of terrorism is ruled and defined by the *UU No. 5 tahun 2018* as

"Acts that use violence or threats of violence that cause an atmosphere of terror or widespread fear, which can lead to victims of this nature mass, and/or cause damage or destruction to vital objects strategic, environmental, public facilities, or international facilities with motifs ideology, politics, or security disturbances."

KontraS argued that this definition of terrorism is too vague and elastic that made it possible to label just about any groups of dissent as terrorist. They also highlighted that the use of the military within the civil space in Papua created plenty of rooms for abuses and acts of violence, as the presence of military troops in civil spaces is seen as a violation of their use. The excessive use of force by the military and polices towards the detainees such as by the brutal torture and interrogation methods are also highlighted in their report in 2021.

Table 4

Sector	Key Metric	Trend/Comparison
Total Displacement	105,878 IDPs	Up from ±85,000 in 2024
Armed Conflict	141-armed clashes	Highest in recent years
Lethal Violence	73 civilians killed	Up from 44 in 2024
Physical Abuse	73 cases of torture	Significant rise from 54 in 2024
Fundamental Freedoms	214 arbitrary detentions	Down from 396 in 2024

Source: (Human Rights Monitor, 2025)

The 2025 data from the Human Rights Monitor, an international human rights watchdog that focuses on plenty of human rights issues, Table 4 reveals a significant escalation in civil and political rights violations, characterised by a sharp rise in physical abuse and lethal force. Throughout the year, documented cases of torture and ill-treatment rose to 73, impacting more than 170 individual victims, a notable increase from the 54 cases reported in 2024. Extra-judicial killings also spiked, with 27 recorded cases resulting in 48 deaths. While the number of enforced disappearance cases remained at 3, the number of victims involved rose significantly to 11. Despite the prevalence of these abuses, accountability remained the exception rather than the rule; only 4 instances of sanctions against security force perpetrators were recorded, leaving a pervasive architecture of legal impunity largely intact.

The armed conflict reached a critical intensity in 2025, with 141 documented clashes spreading across 16 different regencies. Yahukimo and Intan Jaya served as the primary epicentres of violence, recording 35 and 31 clashes, respectively. The toll on combatants included 38 killed and 34 injured among Indonesian security forces, while 29 TPNPB fighters were killed and 16 were injured. Civilians were increasingly caught in the crossfire, with 73 non-combatants killed during clashes or raids, an increase from 44 deaths in 2024. Responsibility for these civilian deaths was split between the warring parties, with 31 attributed to security forces and 42 to TPNPB fighters.

Social and indigenous rights were further eroded by both the ongoing conflict and aggressive state-driven development policies. The education and healthcare sectors in the highlands have been devastated; in Intan Jaya alone, 52 of 59 schools are non-functional, and 6 health clinics were abandoned as staff fled the violence. This structural neglect is reflected in broader health outcomes, with several Papuan provinces reporting the lowest life expectancy in the country. Simultaneously, indigenous land control is under immense pressure from resource extraction projects. For instance, the Strategic National Project in Merauke targets between 1.6 and 2 million hectares for commercial conversion, a process often carried out by military-backed companies without the free, prior, and informed consent of the indigenous Marind people.

Komnas HAM or the Indonesian National Human Rights Commission noted in 2024 that there were 113 instances or cases of human rights violation in Papua (Komnas HAM, 2024b). Atnike Nova Sigiro, the head commissioner of Komnas HAM, stated that in 2024 alone there were 61 casualties of violence in Papua, 32 of them were civilians. Komnas HAM noted in their yearly report that in 2024 there were 2.305 instances of human rights violations, 663 of the reports were directed against the National Police (Polri). Komnas HAM report in 2025 saw an increase of cases with 2.796 reported cases of human rights violations, 752 of them were directed against the National Police (Polri).

These cases are solid proofs of evidence that there are persisting human rights issues happening in Papua. Plenty of human rights watchdog still scrutinise

and observes the cases happening in Papua to this day. Organisations such as KontraS and Human Rights Monitor are only some of many organisations that reports the violences endured by Papuans, alongside them there are also *Memoria Passionis* reports by various SKP's in Papua. Even Komnas HAM which is a government institution to this day still receive and reports human rights violations in Papua.

2.4. The History and Relationship Between the Catholic Church and the Papuan Struggle

The institutional presence of the Catholic Church in Papua is an enduring legacy that has evolved from nineteenth century evangelical missions into a primary pillar of social stability. The formal entry of Catholic missions began in the early 1900s, notably with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC) establishing a base in Merauke in 1905. This was followed by the expansion of the Order of Friars Minor (OFM) into the central highlands during the 1930s. These religious orders did not merely function as proselytizers but acted as the principal architects of the region's civil infrastructure. Through the creation of the *Yayasan Pendidikan dan Persekolahan Katolik* (YPPK), the Church established a comprehensive network of schools that provided the first formal education to indigenous populations in some of the most inaccessible terrains in the world (Campbell, 2016). This early investment in human capital meant that the Church became the primary guardian of indigenous literacy and health, filling a governance vacuum that the state has historically struggled to address. The

schools produced a generation of Papuan intellectuals and leaders who viewed the Church as an institution capable of articulating their social and political aspirations (Triharyanto, 2026).

The transition from a service providing mission to an advocacy-oriented institution was catalysed by the escalating friction between indigenous communities and state security apparatuses following the territory's administrative integration. As the Church's network of schools and clinics became frontline witnesses to the disruption of local life, the institution adapted its structural role. In the 1970s and 1980s, this culminated in the establishment of the *Sekretariat Keadilan dan Perdamaian* (SKP), or the Justice and Peace Commission, across various dioceses such as Jayapura and Merauke. The SKP served as an institutional watchdog, transitioning the Church from a silent service provider into a documented witness of regional instability. This institutional memory is what links the historical missionary era to the modern advocacy network, as the same parishes that once provided primary education now serve as the primary nodes for monitoring human rights conditions (Campbell, 2016). The Church's deep integration into the village life allowed it to maintain a presence in remote areas where government officials and international observers were frequently denied access (Anderson, 2015; Campbell, 2016).

This historical continuity has fostered a collaborative advocacy structure that bridges local grievances with national and international bodies. This network currently operates through a unified front consisting of the Bishops'

Conference of Indonesia (KWI), the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), and the Papuan Council of Churches (DGP) (Triharyanto, 2026). This coalition utilizes its deep reach into remote parishes to bypass state-controlled narratives, providing empirical data on the socio-political reality of the periphery. The advocacy focuses on the protection of indigenous land rights against extractive industries and the monitoring of security operations that impact civilian populations. By operating as a cohesive ecumenical block, these organizations provide a protective layer for local clergy and activists who operate in high-risk zones, ensuring that localized incidents are reported within a broader framework of national accountability. This network also facilitates communication between Papuan communities and international human rights organizations, elevating local issues to the level of global discourse.

Ultimately, the Catholic Church and its advocacy partners have moved toward a role of persistent moral witnessing. The Church currently maintains regional monitoring hubs that track the sociopolitical conditions in isolated areas like Yahukimo and the Bintang Mountains, ensuring that the indicators of these communities are recorded even when state agencies are absent (Anderson, 2015). This work is conducted under a framework that emphasizes the moral and legal obligation to protect the vulnerable, a stance that is often independent of political motivations. By maintaining a presence in the most isolated territories, the Church's advocacy network provides a continuous flow of data that challenges official state narratives regarding regional stability and development. This

ongoing commitment ensures that the human rights landscape in the Indonesian periphery remains visible to the global community, positioning the Church as a vital intermediary between a marginalized population and the mechanisms of justice (Campbell, 2016).