



# RI condemns Vanuatu for including Papuan in delegation

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THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

Jakarta has slammed Vanuatu for deceiving United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet Jeria by smuggling Papuan separatist figure Benny Wenda into the South Pacific nation's delegation.

"Indonesia strongly condemns Vanuatu's action, which deliberately deceived the High Commissioner by taking manipulative steps through the infiltration of Benny Wenda into the Vanuatu delegation," Hasan Kleib, Indonesian Ambassador to the UN in Geneva, said in a press statement published on Wednesday morning Jakarta time.

On Friday, Wenda handed to Bachelet a petition demanding an independence referendum. What he referred to as a 40-kilogram document had 1.8 million signatures, or some three-quarters of the 2.5 million people living in the provinces of West Papua and Papua.

Hasan further said in his statement that neither Bachelet nor the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had been aware of Wenda's presence in the Vanuatu delegation beforehand.

According to the OHCHR, Hasan added, Wenda — who has lived in exile in the United Kingdom since 2003 — was secretly infiltrated in the Vanuatu delegation while his name was not on the list. The delegation paid a courtesy visit to the OHCHR on Fri-



Courtesy of UN

**Michelle Bachelet Jeria**

by Wenda's presence and action in the UPR meeting, Hasan said.

"Vanuatu's action is very disrespectful and very incompatible with the fundamental principles of the UN Charter," he added.

"Indonesia will never retreat from standing up for and defending the territorial sovereignty of the NKRI [Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia]".

Separately, OHCHR deputy spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani echoed Hasan.

She told *The Jakarta Post* that Friday's meeting was upon the request of the Vanuatu government in the context of the UPR session, in which each country has its human rights record peer-reviewed by other states.

"During this meeting, one member of the Vanuatu delegation, Mr Benny Wenda, presented the High Commissioner with a petition. This was not actually a meeting arranged with Mr Wenda for that purpose," Shamdasani said in an e-mail.

In response to that, she said, Bachelet told the delegation, as well as Wenda, that the OHCHR had

day in regard to Vanuatu's UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (UPR) session.

The representative described the OHCHR as being "shocked"

been engaging with the Indonesian authorities on Papua, including the ongoing human rights situation.

The office had also requested access to Papua, which Indonesia had in principle agreed to grant.

"We are waiting for confirmation of the arrangements," Shamdasani added.

Hasan, however, said that an invitation had been conveyed to the previous high commissioner, Zeid al Hussein, so it was not true that the high commissioner "is waiting for an invitation or requesting access".

"The Indonesian government is still committed to inviting the high commissioner for human rights through the regional office in Bangkok," Hasan said in a statement later in the evening in Jakarta. "The pending issue is the time for the visit which is agreed by both parties."

Hasan said the visit arrangement and schedule was discussed during a bilateral meeting in October 2018 with Bachelet as the new high commissioner.

"We are currently coordinating the schedule for the visit expected to take place in 2019.

Benny has been outspoken in demanding a referendum with help from several Pacific countries, such as Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.

During the UN General Assembly in September 2017, prime ministers from both Pacific countries called on the UN Human Rights Council to formally investigate long-standing allegations of human rights abuses in Papua and West Papua provinces.