



UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES

HAUT-COMMISSARIAT DES NATIONS UNIES AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME • OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
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REFERENCE: CERD/EWUAP/2026/CS/BJ/ks

19 January 2026

Excellency,

I write to inform you that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (“the Committee”) received information under its early warning and urgent action procedure in relation to the situation of the Indigenous O’Hongana Manyawa Peoples in the island of Halmahera, North Maluku Province.

According to the information received:

- The O’Hongana Manyawa are nomadic forest dwellers with distinct land tenure systems and with cultural identity based on their attachment to nature and their ancestral territories, including watersheds within the forest. The Indigenous O’Hongana Manyawa Peoples mainly reside in registered settlements across the Halmahera Island while around 500 forest dwellers live in voluntary isolation which entails not maintaining sustained contact with the non-Indigenous population and by rejecting any type of contact with others.
- The domestic legislative framework does not recognize and protect the rights of the Indigenous O’Hongana Manyawa Peoples living in voluntary isolation. Moreover, since the 1970’s the State party has been implementing discriminatory policies against Indigenous Peoples, such as relocation programs to resettle the Indigenous O’Hongana Manyawa Peoples living in voluntary isolation into registered villages and settlements and to abandon the wilderness dwelling lifestyle. The State Party has been implementing a transmigration program to promote and support economic development and ensure the availability of labour force for mining and exploration projects to facilitate abandoning their wilderness dwelling lifestyle.
- There are persistent patterns of stigmatization and use of hateful rhetoric against the Indigenous O’Hongana Manyawa Peoples in the policy framework and by local and central governmental officials and institutions, including describing and labelling them as “dangerous”, “hostile”, “uncultured” and “uneducated”.
- The Indigenous O’Hongana Manyawa Peoples, whether residing in settlements or in voluntary isolation, remains unrecognized as Indigenous Peoples by the local government of the North Maluku Province. Furthermore, in the North Maluku Province, there is no legislative nor procedural frameworks for recognizing Indigenous Peoples.

H.E. Mr. Sidharto Reza Suryodipuro
Permanent Representative of Indonesia
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- Many of the O'Hongana Manyawa settlements are located within nickel mining concessions across the island while those living in voluntary isolation inhabit a forested area that includes 17 nickel mining concessions and two limestone mining concessions.
- In the last ten years, there has been a recorded expansion in the nickel mining projects in the Halmahera Island, such as the establishment of the Indonesia Weda Bay Industrial Park that has been operational since 2020 and the issuance of at least 40 Mining Business Licences and Mining Business Permit Areas. Moreover, since 1998 the State Party has issued more than 60 nickel mining concessions in the island of Halmahera, including within the ancestral and traditional lands of the Indigenous O'Hongana Manyawa Peoples, without conducting consultations with them and obtaining their free, prior and informed consent. Furthermore, the granted nickel mining concessions does not include any mechanisms or requirements to protect the Indigenous O'Hongana Manyawa Peoples living in voluntary isolation, such as creation of no-go zones, buffer zones or no-contact rules.
- While the legislative framework, namely Law No. 4 of 2009 on Mineral and Coal Mining, request holders of mining business permits to negotiate and acquire surface rights from landholders, the Indigenous O'Hongana Manyawa Peoples are excluded from this protection due to the lack of recognition as Indigenous Peoples by the central government and the North Maluku Province local authority and the lack of legal safeguards to protect and recognize their right to own, develop, control and use their traditional lands, territories and resources.
- The expanding mining and exploration projects are causing irreversible harm to the ancestral territories of the Indigenous O'Hongana Manyawa Peoples, including large-scale deforestation and pollution of freshwater sources, with severe impacts on those living in voluntary isolation and depending on natural resources for food, drinking water and medicine.

The Committee is concerned that the allegations regarding the situation of the Indigenous O'Hongana Manyawa Peoples, if verified, would infringe their rights protected under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). Specifically, the Committee is concerned about the reported lack of official recognition of the O'Hongana Manyawa as Indigenous Peoples and that the legal and procedural frameworks to recognize Indigenous Peoples are not in accordance with the international standards. It is also concerned about the lack of legal framework to protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly in relation to the adverse impacts caused by the mining and exploration projects on their rights to health, to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as well as to own, develop, control and use their communal lands, territories and resources. Moreover, the Committee is concerned about the reported lack of effective and meaningful consultation with the Indigenous O'Hongana Manyawa Peoples or measures to obtain their free, prior and informed consent regarding mining projects on their territories.

In this regard, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations concerning Indonesia ([CERD/C/IND/CO/3](#), paras. 15–17) and its [General Recommendation No. 23 \(1997\) on the rights of indigenous peoples](#).



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In accordance with Article 9 (1) of the Convention and Article 66 of its Rules of procedure, the Committee requests the State party to provide information on the situation of the Indigenous O'Hongana Manyawa Peoples, particularly those living in voluntary isolation, and regarding the above-mentioned allegations, particularly the adverse impacts of expanding mining and exploration projects on their rights, by 17 April 2026. Finally, the Committee requests the State party to submit its 4th to 6th combined periodic report, which is overdue since 2010.

Allow me, Excellency, to reiterate the wish of the Committee to continue to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Government of Indonesia with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the Convention.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Balcerzak", followed by a horizontal line.

Michal Balcerzak
Chair

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination