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COUNCIL



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PETITION FROM FATHER JOHN MOMIS AND MR. JOHN TEOSIN  
CONCERNING PAPUA NEW GUINEA

(Circulated in accordance with rule 85, paragraph 1 of the  
rules of procedure of the Trusteeship Council)

21 August 1975

Secretary-General  
United Nations  
United Nations Building  
42nd Street and First Avenue  
New York, New York

Dear Secretary-General:

On behalf of the people of Bougainville we, Father John Momis, representative for Bougainville in the House of Assembly of Papua New Guinea, and John Teosin, member of the Bougainville Provincial Assembly, formally submit the enclosed petition to the Secretary General of the United Nations on behalf of the people of Bougainville in accordance with the authority vested in us by the Bougainville Provincial Assembly.

Although Bougainville was arbitrarily thrust into political union with other groups with whom the people of Bougainville have no ethnic, cultural and historical affinities, the people have throughout this relatively short phase of colonial-type of domination accepted the juridical fact that we are within a Territory which, given the right of self-determination, we would never have chosen to join.

Nevertheless, during this period we have never sought to assert our fundamental rights to self-determination by force.

Indeed one of the signatories to this letter and the enclosed petition, Father John Momis, was Deputy Chairman and effective head of the Papua New Guinea Constitutional Planning Committee specifically set up for the purpose of creating a constitution for an independent and sovereign Papua New Guinea which, whilst preserving the unity of that Territory, would nevertheless recognize the ethnic and cultural differences between the various peoples comprising that state.

After several years of deliberating, resulting in the creation of a constitution that seemed to reflect the aspirations of all the peoples of Papua New Guinea, the Papua New Guinea Government leaders, ignoring the recommendations of the Constitutional Planning Committee, have effectively gagged debate in order to force through the House of Assembly a constitution which bears little resemblance to that originally and democratically agreed upon.

The people of Bougainville regard such behavior as constitutionally intolerable and have been constrained to accept that there can be no further negotiations with the Government of Papua New Guinea because of bad faith.

The people of Bougainville are therefore petitioning the United Nations in the hope that that body will ensure the protection of Bougainville rights as peoples of a Trust Territory.

Should the United Nations fail to properly discharge its duties of protecting our interests, we will be left with no alternative but to secede unilaterally from Papua New Guinea.

However, we wish to make clear that in asserting our rights to self determination we have no intention of resorting to force of arms, as this would be completely out of keeping with our character and traditions.

We shall, should the need arise, resort only to passive resistance and civil disobedience towards the Government of Papua New Guinea.

Should this result in the committal of troops or para-military forces to Bougainville by the Papua New Guinea Government and in the spilling of blood then that blood will be our blood and it will be on the hands of the Government of Papua New Guinea and a stain on the conscience of the Government of Australia and on the United Nations.

Yours respectfully,

(Signed) Father John MOMIS

(Signed) John TEOSIN

c/o The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel  
49th Street and Park Avenue  
New York, New York

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EnclosurePetition from the people of Bougainville to the Secretary-General  
of the United Nations

1. By virtue of the Trusteeship Agreement for the Territory of New Guinea, approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 13 December 1946, the Government of Australia is the Administering Authority for the United Nations Trust Territory of New Guinea.
2. Bougainville is a part of the said Trust Territory.
3. Pursuant to the Papua and New Guinea Act, 1949-1971, and in accordance with Article 5 of the Trusteeship Agreement of 1946, the Government of Australia placed the Trust Territory of New Guinea into administrative union with the Australian External Territory of Papua.
4. On 16 September 1975, the Government of Australia, with the approval of the United Nations, intends to make a grant to full sovereign and independent status to the Government and Territory of Papua New Guinea.
5. It is the declared and considered view of the people of Bougainville that any such grant of independence, and consequential termination of the Trusteeship Agreement, would involve the United Nations and the Administering Authority in a clear breach of the basic objectives of the Trusteeship System as defined and set out in Article 76 of the Charter of the United Nations, and the Administering Authority in a breach of Articles 3 and 8 of the Trusteeship Agreement.
6. The people of Bougainville believe and assert that the United Nations and the Administering Authority are contravening both the word and the spirit of the Trusteeship System in permitting the untimely creation of a sovereign and independent State of Papua New Guinea under a Government which, quite clearly, is incapable of commanding the respect, assent and allegiance of a significant number of its citizens, and in the context of widespread dissatisfaction with the constitutional arrangements which it is intended shall accompany the proposed new State into nationhood.
7. In the light of these unhappy circumstances, the people of Bougainville firmly believe that the proposed grant of sovereign and independent status to the Government of Papua New Guinea is both premature and a gross betrayal of their interests and status as inhabitants of the Trust Territory.
8. History has shown the disastrous consequences that accompany Governments emerging into statehood ruled by constitutions which lack the full and genuine consent of the peoples to whom they relate. It would be cynical to suggest, and vain to think, that Papua New Guinea might prove exceptional in this respect.

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9. Only a realistic re-appraisal of both the timetable and the constitutional arrangements for independence can afford some measure of certainty that the political future of Papua New Guinea will bear the stamp of peace, prosperity, unity and the mutual co-operation of the peoples of this proposed new State.

10. Mindful, therefore, of the imminence of what must be an irretrievable act of transfer of power by the United Nations and the Administering Authority, the people of Bougainville humbly request the Secretary-General of the United Nations to take such urgent steps as he may consider proper and effective so as to ensure:

(a) That there shall be no termination of the trusteeship arrangements for the Trust Territory of New Guinea as proposed for 16 September 1975;

(b) That there shall be no transfer of power or grant of independence to the Government of Papua New Guinea as presently constituted until such time as constitutional arrangements have been determined to command the full and genuine consent of the peoples of the proposed new State.

(c) That as a matter of extreme urgency, this petition is laid before a special session of the Trusteeship Council, convened for the sole purpose of giving immediate consideration to the contents thereof.

(d) That, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Trusteeship Council, the representative or representatives of the petitioners be afforded the facility of making oral representations in support and elaboration of this petition.

(Signed) Father John MOMIS

(Signed) John TEOSIN

Dated 21 August 1975

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