

Tuesday, 29 March 2011

## Unions call on Indonesia to release arrested nurses

Australian unions have called on the Indonesian Government to respect international labour Conventions and human and trade union rights following the arrest of five nurses in West Papua.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said it was outrageous that the nurses had been detained for nine days and were reportedly subjected to long periods of police interrogation, simply because they had supported an industrial campaign to ensure they received their contracted entitlements.

“It is disturbing that at the same time as workers in North Africa are beginning to benefit from newfound democratic freedoms, repression of basic human rights including the freedom of association is taking place in our region,” Ms Kearney said.

“These West Papuan nurses were pursuing their legitimate rights and it is obscene to think they are languishing in jail.

“I am advised that more than 1500 nurses took spontaneous and unprecedented industrial action in response to an announcement that the Government of the province of West Papua had withdrawn industrial payments.

“We are told that in an attempt to intimidate the nurses and to force them back to work, five nurses were arrested.

“The intimidation has failed and the nurses and their community are more resolute than ever in their determination to secure the release of the five nurses and to win the industrial campaign.

“However it is simply outrageous that this type of intimidation and violation of human and workers’ rights is occurring.”

Ms Kearney said the arrests of the nurses, including two officials of the National Union of Indonesian Nurses, was a heavy-handed and excessive response to nurses pursuing a legitimate industrial campaign in support of their contracted entitlements.

“This action is a clear breach of ILO Convention 87 (Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise), which was ratified by Indonesia in June 1998.

“It violates the fundamental human and trade union rights enshrined in C87 and reflects poorly on the Indonesian authorities.

“The Indonesian Government should take immediate steps to release the nurses, to remove all charges and to enter a constructive dialogue with the National Union of Indonesian Nurses to resolve these issues.”

**Media contact:**

Rebecca Tucker ph (03) 9664 7359 or 0408 031 269; [rtucker@actu.org.au](mailto:rtucker@actu.org.au)