

30 January 2025

LAWASIA Statement on Violence in Papua New Guinea and Support for the Papua New Guinea Law Society

LAWASIA expresses profound concern over the escalating violence in Papua New Guinea (PNG). LAWASIA stands in solidarity with the Papua New Guinea Law Society in its efforts to uphold the rule of law and advocate for peace and security. LAWASIA supports the recent statements of the Commonwealth Lawyers Association and the South Pacific Law Association.¹

LAWASIA acknowledges the Papua New Guinea Law Society's statements of 5 January 2025 regarding the violence in Goilala, Central Province, and 25 October 2024 concerning the escalating violence in Enga Province.² LAWASIA shares the Law Society's concerns about recurrent intercommunal violence and the urgent need for a comprehensive response that addresses both immediate security threats and the underlying causes of violence.

Recent reports highlight the severity of the situation. In July 2024, violent attacks on three remote villages in East Sepik Province resulted in the deaths of at least 26 people, including 16 children.³ Attackers reportedly beheaded victims and burned homes, forcing survivors to flee. The death toll could rise as authorities continue their search for missing persons. These attacks have continued since that time. These atrocities strike at the heart of humanity and undermine the fundamental principles of justice and the rule of law.

LAWASIA also strongly condemns threats of physical violence against the President of the Papua New Guinea Law Society, Mr. Hubert Namani, following the issuance of these statements. Intimidation and threats against legal professionals are an attack on the rule of law and must be unequivocally rejected.

¹ <https://www.commonwealthlawyers.com/statement/cla-statement-on-atrocities-in-goilala-central-province-papua-new-guinea/>

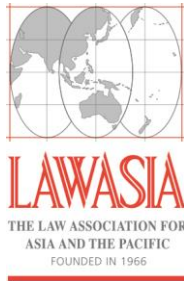
² <https://thediplomat.com/2024/09/35-plus-killed-in-days-of-tribal-violence-in-papua-new-guinea-police-say/>

³ <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/world/523187/people-beheaded-a-village-burned-amid-brutal-violence-in-png-province>

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LAWASIA urges the Papua New Guinea government and relevant authorities to ensure that adequate and well-resourced investigations are conducted into these violent incidents in accordance with due process. It also supports the Law Society's calls for government and community leaders to work collaboratively to ensure that all communities in PNG can live in security, free from violence and fear.

LAWASIA supports the Commonwealth Law Association's support for urgent action. Noting that PNG is preparing to celebrate 50 years of independence, LAWASIA agrees that "the rule of law requires the protection of life, delivery of justice and preserving shared humanity"⁴. LAWASIA supports the CLA's call for action, and:

1. Calls upon the Government of Papua New Guinea to ensure adequate protection is provided to all its citizens;
2. Urges swift action by law enforcement agencies, such as the police, to bring perpetrators to justice;
3. Supports the Papua New Guinea Law Society in its calls for justice to be delivered and;
4. Calls for support for the PNG Law Society and all those who require that all necessary steps are taken to ensure the rule of law is respected and prevails.

As the premier association of legal professionals in the Asia-Pacific, LAWASIA remains committed to defending the independence, safety, and integrity of the legal profession and upholding the rule of law across the region.

Shyam Divan
President, LAWASIA

⁴ <https://www.commonwealthlawyers.com/statement/cla-statement-on-atrocities-in-goilala-central-province-papua-new-guinea/>

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