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SENIOR WHIP
DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

November 9, 2010

Dear Professor Kurtz,

I would like to thank George Mason University and Herman Wainggai for including me in this historic conference, “West Papua: The Washington Solution.” As a member of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, it is truly an honor to participate in this event.

In the September 22nd Congressional Hearing on Crimes against Humanity this year, the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Asia, Pacific, and Global Environment attempted to address the difficult situation that West Papuans face today. It was in this important hearing that Congress formally addressed, for the first time, the human rights violations occurring in West Papua. As a colony of Indonesia, the nation of West Papua is approaching a turning point in its history. These human rights abuses have gone on far too long and there must be international recognition and respect for the rights of West Papuans.

During the Congressional hearing and in the House Resolution 1355, a number of issues were broached – these issues need to be addressed and resolved for the sake of West Papua. It is my sincerest hope that the unjust actions of the Indonesian military and government against West Papuans are reformed and that they are held accountable. During that hearing, my colleagues expressed their concern for the violations against humanity perpetuated by the Indonesian military. I join them now, and I too express my fear that without an increase in awareness of the plight of the West Papuans in conjunction with the inaction of international actors, the situation in West Papua will only continue to deteriorate.

Today marks an important day, in which individuals who are genuinely concerned for West Papua’s future come together and work towards addressing these contentious issues in order to reach a solution. It is my hope that this conference ignites an interest among students to learn how the West Papuan history is connected to the United States. That this is not only a human rights concern, but also this is of international importance. The United States and West Papuan have a shared history of sorts, from General McArthur to President Kennedy; and these ties

are important to understand when working towards a resolve for the West Papuan people.

We risk losing the rich culture of the West Papuan population in this historic struggle. As a member of the Foreign Affairs committee and the Human Rights Caucus, I know that it would be a travesty if the human rights violations do not come to an immediate halt. I thank you very much for including me in this conversation, and I sincerely hope that during this conference resolve is met and we can work in the near future towards securing West Papua's security.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sheila Jackson Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sheila" being the most prominent.

Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee