



Honorary Co-Chairs
The Honorable Václav Havel
The Most Reverend Desmond M. Tutu

FREEDOM NOW

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 22, 2011

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**FREEDOM NOW WELCOMES CALL OF 26 MEMBERS OF U.S. HOUSE
FOR RELEASE OF RENOWNED HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATE FILEP KARMA**

Today, a bipartisan group of 26 members of the United States House of Representatives, led by Reps. Joseph Pitts (R-PA) and James Moran (D-VA) requested that President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia release Papuan human-rights advocate Filep Karma. In the letter, attached, the Representatives declared:

Mr. Karma's case represents an unfortunate echo of Indonesia's pre-democratic era, when Indonesia regularly imprisoned political activists on unlawful grounds.... We urge your government to uphold its commitments to international law and to its own domestic law and immediately and unconditionally release Mr. Karma.

Other signatories to the letter included members of the House's Committee on Foreign Affairs, Chris Smith (R-NJ), Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA), and Eni Faleomavaega (D-AS); and co-chairs of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, Jim McGovern (D-MA) and Frank Wolf (R-VA).

Freedom Now attorney Sachi Jepson stated: "We, along with an international community of supporters, are heartened by the House's efforts to restore justice and health to Mr. Karma. We sincerely hope the Government of Indonesia will bring an end to Mr. Karma's unlawful detention and that he can return to his family at long last."

Mr. Filep Karma, 52, is a prominent Papuan political activist and former Indonesian civil servant who is serving a fifteen-year prison sentence for his peaceful human rights advocacy. He was arrested on December 1, 2004, for organizing and participating in a ceremony at Trikora Field in Abepura, Paupa, where hundreds gathered to raise the Papuan Morning Star flag and celebrate the anniversary of the 1961 Papuan declaration of independence from Dutch rule. Although Mr. Karma has explicitly denounced the use of violence, he was charged with treason and sentenced to fifteen years in prison. His wrongful arrest, detention, and trial violate Indonesian law and Indonesian obligations under international law. Mr. Karma is an inspirational leader of nonviolent human rights advocacy—currently suffering respiratory infections and abdominal pains while being denied medical attention.

Freedom Now welcomes the support of these Representatives and joins them in calling on President Yudhoyono to release Mr. Karma and urging the Indonesian government to comply with its commitments under international law and its own constitution.

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Our mission is to free prisoners of conscience through focused legal, political and public relations advocacy efforts.

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 19, 2011

Dr. H Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono
President of the Republic of Indonesia
Istana Merdeka
Jakarta 10110
Indonesia

Your Excellency:

As Members of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, we write asking your government to release Filep Samuel Karma, a Papuan political activist and former civil servant, who has been unlawfully and arbitrarily detained since 2004.

Mr. Karma is a prominent non-violent Papuan political activist. He is currently serving a 15-year prison sentence following his raising of the Papuan Morning Star flag at a 2004 political rally celebrating the 1961 Papuan declaration of independence from Dutch rule. U.S. policy towards Indonesia supports the advancement of universal human rights and the fair and non-discriminatory treatment of all people, which includes the peoples of Papua and West Papua. As a strategic partner, we remain concerned that your government meet its fundamental obligations to protect the rights of its people, as respect for human rights strengthens democracy.

Mr. Karma's trial violated international standards of due process of law. For example, the judge made several plain statements indicating a bias against Mr. Karma. Additionally, Mr. Karma's appeal was rejected on unfounded procedural grounds. And during his incarceration, he has suffered degrading and inhumane treatment, including the denial of necessary medical treatment. Recently, Mr. Karma has been placed in an isolation cell that is causing respiratory problems and has been denied adequate food and water. Additionally, Indonesian authorities have repeatedly threatened to move Mr. Karma to Nusa Kambangan Prison, which reputedly has the worst prison conditions in Papua.

Mr. Karma's case represents an unfortunate echo of Indonesia's pre-democratic era, when Indonesia regularly imprisoned political activists on unlawful grounds. Indeed, Mr. Karma's case was cited in the United States State Department 2009 Human Rights Report as an example of Indonesia's detention of political prisoners. Accordingly, Mr. Karma's release would be a welcome indication of the Government of Indonesia's otherwise robust commitment to democracy and human rights.

We urge your government uphold its commitments to international law and to its own domestic law and immediately and unconditionally release Mr. Karma.



Joseph R. Pitts
Member of Congress

Sincerely,



James P. Moran
Member of Congress



Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress



Heath Shuler
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Henry A. Waxman
Member of Congress



Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress



Edolphus Towns
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Michael M. Honda
Member of Congress



Bob Filner
Member of Congress



Janice D. Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Thaddeus McCotter
Member of Congress



Barney Frank
Member of Congress



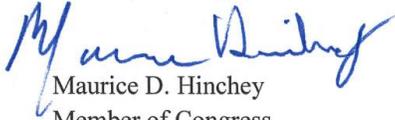
Steven R. Rothman
Member of Congress



Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Dana Rohrabacher
Member of Congress



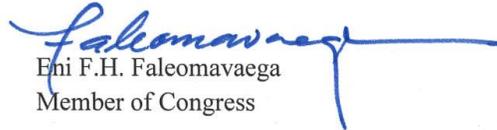
Maurice D. Hinchey
Member of Congress



Sam Farr
Member of Congress



Edward J. Markey
Member of Congress



Eni F.H. Faleomavaega
Member of Congress