



## OFFICE OF BENNY WENDA

Dear Oxford City Council and the Oxford community,

This year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the official launch of the Free West Papua Campaign in the Oxford Town Hall in 2005.

On behalf of the people of West Papua, I would like to offer you our most sincere and heartfelt gratitude for the incredible support you have continued to show us over the last decade.

Oxford was the birthplace of the Free West Papua Campaign and thanks to the incredible support and solidarity shown to us by the city authorities and people of Oxford, it has grown into a truly International Campaign which now has worldwide influence and a worldwide supporter base.

I remember with great emotion seeing the West Papuan Morning flag first flown high above the Town Hall, on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2005. Back then we had strong hopes for the future of the Campaign, but no-one could have anticipated the incredible effects of international solidarity for the freedom struggle that continues to gain strength and momentum day by day. We have grown from a volunteer organisation to a widespread international movement, now with permanent offices in the Netherlands, Papua New Guinea, Australia and South Africa, as well as here on Oxford's Cowley Road.

The West Papuan flag itself, known to West Papuans as the Morning Star, is a powerful symbol of our struggle and represents the undying unity as one people among the many tribes of West Papua. In West Papua we do not have the freedom to raise our national flag and doing so can result in a 15 year jail sentence. So it fills our hearts with hope to see the flag flying here, in this great city and reminds us that we are not alone and not forgotten.

Oxford Town hall has set a real precedent and now the West Papuan flag is being raised atop town and city halls in countries all around the world.

I would therefore like to thank you all for the deeply valued, ongoing support shown for the West Papuan people. All the cross party representatives at Oxford City Council continue to show true spirit and unity in helping my people to be free from the ongoing illegal occupation of the country and the ongoing West Papuan genocide ;in which over 500,000 West Papuan people have already been killed.

I would also like to give special thanks to our long term supporters in Oxford such as Councillor Elise Benjamin, Andrew Smith MP and Lord Harries, former Bishop of Oxford. Together with many other notable figures and with the Oxford Community, you have made us West Papuans feel truly welcome and safe in this open-hearted

city where we can express our opinions freely. I have come to think of Oxford as being like my village as it is a home away from home for myself, my family and the West Papuan struggle. We will continue to campaign from this city until West Papua is finally free at last.

Today we symbolically give the West Papuan struggle back to the people of Oxford, reasserting the enormous trust we have in you all in continuing to advocate on our behalf for our freedom.

I look forward to keep walking arm in arm with yourselves and with my people as we continue walking down the long road to freedom.

We West Papuans feel that this Campaign is very safe in the hands of the people of Oxford. From this city and from all around the world, we are making West Papua's history and one day the people of West Papua will be sure to pay our forever enduring gratitude and thanks to you all of again when West Papua is finally free at last. Oxford will forever be in our hearts and minds.

Once again, thank you all very much and my warmest regards to you all.

**Benny Wenda**

West Papuan Independence Leader

[www.bennywenda.org](http://www.bennywenda.org)

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