

## Country Report: Papua New Guinea September 2021

The island of New Guinea is divided in half, with the west under Indonesian control as the province of West Papua and the east being the sovereign nation of Papua New Guinea (PNG). Under colonial rule, the Dutch controlled the western side of the island. The Germans and British divided the eastern half. Following the Second World War, Australia governed [Papua New Guinea](#) under United Nations Trusteeship for 20 years until 1975, when Papua New Guinea (PNG) formally gained its independence. Indonesia invaded and took control of West Papua in 1962.

In 1988, the island of Bougainville declared independence from PNG. The conflict arose over a large copper mine called Panguna, co-owned by the mining conglomerate Rio Tinto and the PNG government. The [Panguna mine](#) devastated Bougainville's environment, and the local population saw little of the profits.

In response, the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) was formed to fight for independence. The PNG government enacted a total blockade of the island and began a [scorched earth campaign](#) to root out the BRA. In total, over 15,000 people were killed and 60,000 more displaced. While the PNG government and Bougainville representatives reached a formal peace agreement in 1998, several factions in Bougainville have been agitating to renew the conflict.

Environmental exploitation and urbanization are increasingly threatening communities in the PNG Highlands and on the outlying islands. [Mining](#) and [deforestation](#) have polluted rivers and depleted hunting and fishing stocks. The increased scarcity of resources has led to widespread [outbreaks of violence](#) between communities and tribes, with the PNG government having little authority to enforce law and order or do justice in the country.

[Violence against women and girls](#) is widespread in PNG. [Over](#) two-thirds of women have experienced domestic violence, and nearly half have been subjected to rape. Young criminal gangs, known locally as [Raskol](#), in big cities such as Port Moresby and Lae have played a large part in the rise in violent crime and rape. PNG's [crime rate](#) is among the highest in the world.

While tribal and gang-related violence in Papua New Guinea is widespread, it is characteristically localized and on a small scale. Genocide Watch considers Papua New Guinea to be at **Stage 3: Discrimination** and **Stage 5: Organization**.

### Genocide Watch Recommends:

- The PNG government should limit contracts with irresponsible foreign corporations to reduce further deforestation and environmental pollution.
- The PNG government should enact legislation that would ban or restrict ownership of firearms in Papua New Guinea.
- Foreign associates, primarily Australia, should assist PNG in reforming its judicial system to cope with rampant violence against women.