

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Ligue Internationale de Femmes pour la Paix et la Liberté

Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad

Consultative Status with UN ECOSOC, UNCTAD and UNESCO; Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO, and UNICEF.



2 June 2008

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International Secretariat:

1, rue de Varembe, C.P.28,
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland
Tel: (+41 22) 919-7080,
Fax: (+41 22) 919-7081
Email: inforequest@wilpf.ch

United Nations Office:

777 UN Plaza,
New York, NY 10017, USA
Tel: (+1 212) 682-1265,
Fax: (+1 212) 286-8211,
Email: wilpfun@igc.org

www.wilpf.ch
www.ReachingCriticalWill.org
www.PeaceWomen.org

President Kabui
Bougainville Autonomous Government
Buka, Bougainville
Fax: + 675 973 9061
Email: abghausparl@daltron.com.pg
Ph: + 675 973 9416

Dear President Kabui,

The members and leadership of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom urge you to reinstate the Women's Minister of the Bougainville Autonomous Government, Magdalene Toroansi.

Magdalene Toroansi represented very valid concerns in your country when she opposed the reopening of the Panguna mine in your Cabinet vote.

The sensitivities around the Panguna mine and the associated fears of conflict aroused by its reopening are valid given that this mine, and particularly its operation by foreign companies, has caused so much pain and death in your country during the 1989-2002 fighting.

There are strong grounds for questioning your signature on the agreement with the Canadian company, Invincible. There was no transparency, accountability or due process; the parliament had not been consulted, let alone the women land owners.

Mr. President, to preserve the very fragile peace in Bougainville, and to preserve your culture, the women land owners must be consulted on any decision to mine land by your government.

Your Women's Minister was serving you well by representing her constituency, and by trying to help you see the potential results of a hasty action on the Panguna mine. Your leadership should be able to sustain criticism and questions; sacking those who challenge you is not acceptable. It is especially unacceptable to remove voices who are working to prevent conflict, and conflict is a very strong possibility if the Panguna mine is not handled very carefully.

My organisation strongly urges you to withdraw the agreement with Invincible and reinstate Magdalene Toroansi. We are contacting our Foreign Ministry to communicate our concerns about the situation in Bougainville.

Sincerely

Annelise Ebbe
President

Kerstin Grebäck
President