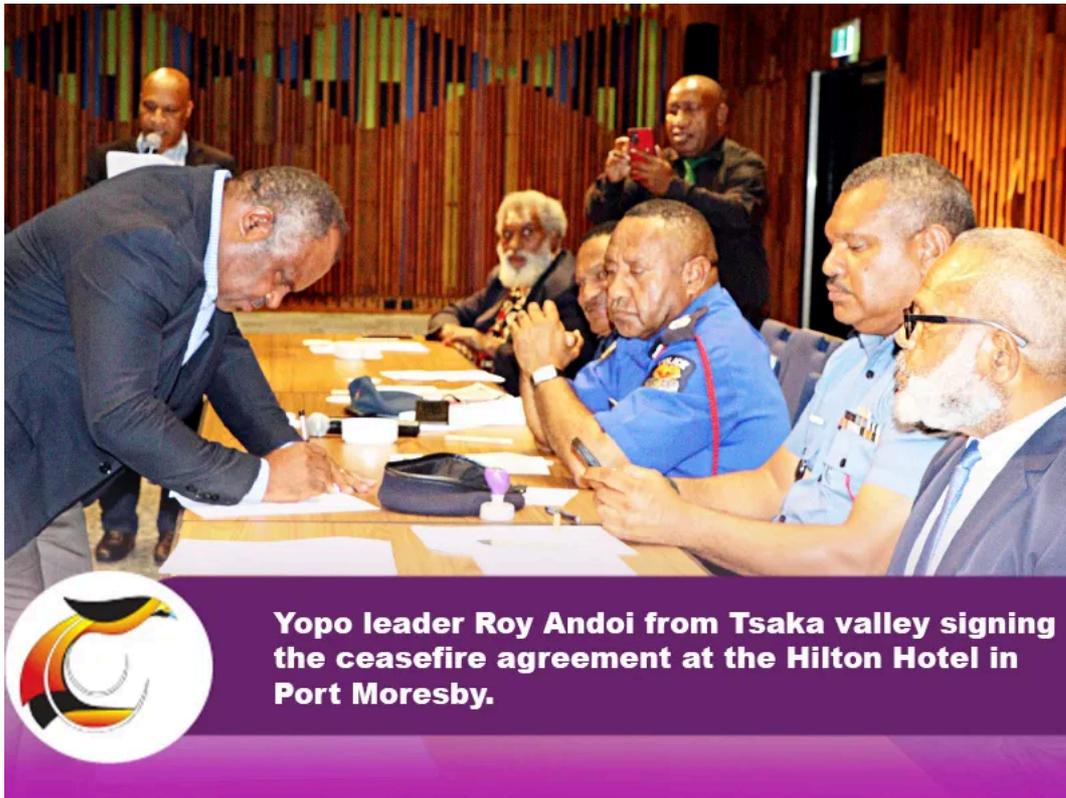


TOP STORIES

Historic ceasefire signed

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Yopo leader Roy Andoi from Tsaka valley signing the ceasefire agreement at the Hilton Hotel in Port Moresby.

A HISTORIC ceasefire agreement was signed last night between two warring tribes from Enga Province that will completely end killings in Middle Lai, Aiyale and Tsaka Valley of Wapenamanda District.

Last night, tribal chiefs of Yopo and Palinau agreed to an unconditional ceasefire of three months and to lay down their arms. They agreed with government negotiators at the Hilton Hotel in Port Moresby to stop fighting and return to their communities to start peace talks.

The agreement, however, does not contain a provision for the surrender of the weapons, which has empowered the bloodshed.

Intense fighting over the last three years has turned the Tsaka valley, Aiyale village and Middle Lai into a land of tears, with thousands killed, millions of Kina worth of properties razed and thousands of men, women and children, maimed, left homeless as refugees.

Government services of schools and health centres were affected in the brutal war between the tribal alliance of Yopo allies and the Palinau allies.

The alliances were engaged in heavy fighting using guerilla tactics while armed with modern day weapons of machine guns, carbines, shotguns and hand grenades.

The two opposing alliances agreed for peace, and acknowledging their respective peace proposals that they each submitted to the State's Peace Initiative Committee (PIC) and further acknowledging:

- (I) the many lives that have been lost on both sides;
- (II) the massive destruction of homes, livelihoods, land and property including livestock;
- (III) the devastation of villages and communities resulting in the displacement of thousands of people from the Tsaka Valley, Middle Lai and Aiyale Valley which has led to a humanitarian crisis.

Unconditional Ceasefire

Both factions agree to an unconditional three-month ceasefire to end tribal warfare and declare that:

- The fighting factions, having experienced and witnessed the devastating effects of their conflict, hereby voluntarily surrender to God Almighty and the State of PNG and pledge to end their warfare through this Cease Fire Agreement.
- The fighting factions hereby further pledge to work together with the State and its agencies to bring to an END their conflict and work towards restoring peace and normalcy in their communities through the established legal processes to deal with all other conflicts and issues in the community.
- Both fighting factions agree to lay down arms and cease and desist from all forms of hostile engagements.
- Both fighting factions agree to cease all warlike, provocative, inciteful, and or disrespectful behaviour that may be considered as actions that may trigger the breach of this Cease Fire Agreement.
- Both fighting factions agree to maintain the status quo and agree not to trespass into each other's traditional land boundaries.
- Both fighting factions pledge to remain only within their respective customary land boundaries that have not been destroyed and which lands they now currently occupy.
- Both fighting factions agree to preserve the status quo by further agreeing to not move into their respective lands that are considered as fighting areas for the duration of this Cease Fire Agreement
- Both fighting factions agree that Security Personnel are to be present at all hot spot areas until such time normalcy has been fully restored.
- Both fighting factions agree to submit to and respect State authorities in all its composite forms that are involved in the peace and restoration process.
- Both fighting factions undertake to adhere to this agreement as well as all preventative orders issued by the Enga Provincial Law and Order Office from time to time, which orders are annexed hereto for full compliance, and breach of which shall result in the lawful consequences.

“The fighting factions, without reservation, undertake to the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC) and the Enga Provincial Government that their respective tribesmen, women and children and or any persons associated with them, whether hired or otherwise, WILL, within the fighting zones in Tsaka Valley and Middle Lai areas and along the Highways between Birip and Pombopos and make sure:

- (i) There will be no disturbance of any kind by any means, way or form on the highways and public roads;
- (ii) That no armed men will be seen at and/or harass or intimidate, provoke or otherwise any person, whether directly involved in the tribal conflict or from any neighbouring villages;
- (iii) That there shall be no disorderly behaviour of any sort;
- (iv) That any suspected gunmen or hired man or mercenary or any person otherwise known who may be present in the war zone or are identified wherever they are caught, and identified as a gunman or hired man or mercenary will be detained, arrested; and
- (v) That any conduct, action or behaviour which may be considered as warlike, provocative, inciteful, and or disrespectful behaviour capable of being considered as actions that may trigger the breach of this Ceasefire Agreement.

The RPNGC STRICTLY requires the following to be observed within the fighting zones within the Tsaka Valley and Middle Lai and Aiyal Valley areas as well as along the highway between Birip and Pombapus:

- (iIV) No disturbances of any kind or form on highways and public roads;
- (iiIV) No movement of armed men within the war zone or the neighbouring villages, whether or not they are actually harassing, or intimidating anyone directly or indirectly involved in tribal conflict;
- (VII) No disorderly behaviour or use of provocative words or utterances which may breach the peace or incite disturbance or cause disharmony.