Miner Shot Dead In Indonesian Strike Violence

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JAKARTA, Oct. 10 (Kyodo) -- At least one mine worker was killed and seven people injured Monday in a clash between police and thousands of striking workers of Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold's Grasberg mine in Indonesia's Papua province on Monday, hospital and police officials said.

An employee of Mimika Regional Hospital who asked not to be named said the mine worker died of a gunshot wound, while Papua police spokesman Wachyono said that six police officers and a mine worker were injured in the melee.

Ramdani Sirait, spokesman of local subsidiary PT Freeport Indonesia, told Kyodo News that the striking workers gathered in the morning at the Freeport bus terminal in the town of Timika in a bid to stop other workers from reporting for work.

When police tried to intervene, the striking workers retaliated by throwing stones, Sirait said, adding that the police opened fire to defend themselves.

In a press statement later, Sirait said that Freeport is "continuing to work with the local police to deal with these acts of intimidation so that our workers located in Timika can exercise their rights to return to work if they so desire."

"The individuals that are responsible for these illegal acts of aggression should be held accountable," he added.

Neither Sirait nor Wachyono, however, were able to confirm the casualty toll.

Some 12,000 of 23,000 local employees of PT Freeport Indonesia have staged mass rallies and gone on strike since Sept. 15, demanding a 25 percent wage increase.

The company, however, has rejected the demand and only agreed to a 22 percent increase.

The workers are sticking to their demand and refusing to work until the company's management grants their request.

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