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Indonesia: EU ban on military and security exports to Jakarta must not be lifted, for now

The European Union must not resume the sale of arms or security equipment likely to be used to commit human rights violations in Indonesia. By doing so, it will risk condemning more people to human rights abuses at the hands of a security force equipped with weapons manufactured in Europe, Amnesty International said today.

" While East Timor is now secure, similar patterns of intimidation and killing which shocked the world and prompted the EU to impose military sanctions on Indonesia are being repeated in parts of Indonesia," the human rights organisation pointed out, responding to reports that the EU is about to lift the ban on military and security exports, imposed in September 1999.

" Indonesian security forces who stand accused of crimes against humanity and war crimes in East Timor continue to be allowed to get away with murder in Indonesia. In this highly volatile period of political transition, how can the EU be confident that transfers of armoured personnel carriers, machine-guns and internal security equipment will not be used to commit human rights violations?" Amnesty International asked.

The organisation pointed out that Indonesian police personnel who joined with militia groups to attack innocent civilians in East Timor last year are now reported to be stationed in Aceh, where scores of people have been killed or have "disappeared" in recent months.

There are also allegations that elements of the Indonesian security forces have taken sides in the communal conflict between Christians and Muslims in the Moluccan islands, which has resulted in hundreds of deaths over the last year.

In West Timor, military-backed militias continue to hamper international efforts to repatriate East Timorese refugees who fled or were forcibly expelled in September 1999. Reports of threats, intimidation, killing and sexual violence by militia members are commonplace. Despite repeated calls for their disarming and disbanding, there is still militia activity in the area.

In the past, EU countries have supplied the Indonesian security forces with a range of technology, including water cannon, armoured personnel carriers, sub-machine guns, small arms and ammunition, some of which is known to have been used against civilians.

In the run-up to the East Timor ballot last year, for example, Finnish-made bullet casings were found after a militia attack in Dili, and UK Hawk aircraft were used to intimidate the East Timorese population.

"Such equipment must not be shipped to Indonesia at the present time. To do so would be grossly irresponsible and risk facilitating human rights violations," Amnesty International said. ENDS.../

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