

20 September 2001

AI Index ASA 21/045/2001 - News Service Nr. 167

## **Indonesia: "New era of partnership" between US and Indonesia must prioritize human rights**

*In a joint statement issued yesterday, President George Bush and President Megawati Sukarnoputri vowed to open "a new era of bilateral cooperation based on shared democratic values and a common interest in promoting regional stability and prosperity." Today Amnesty International urged both governments not to lose sight of the critical need to make the protection of human rights the cornerstone of such cooperation.*

*"Any military assistance to Indonesia must be targetted at the core issues of institutional reform, accountability and transparency," Amnesty International said.*

*The Indonesian police and military are continuing to commit serious human rights violations, including torture and unlawful killings, particularly in the provinces of Aceh and Papua (Irian Jaya) where pro-independence movements are active. Armed opposition groups have also been responsible for human rights abuses in both provinces.*

*In Aceh, over 1,000 people, many of them ordinary civilians, have been killed in the conflict so far this year. Investigations into human rights violations have been rare, and with very few exceptions, have failed to result in the perpetrators being brought to justice. Amnesty International is deeply concerned that in practice, the security forces are free to kill and torture with impunity.*

*"Under these circumstances, exporting arms or engaging in operational training with Indonesia would send completely the wrong message," Amnesty International said.*

*Legal and judicial reform are a fundamental condition for accountability and justice. Amnesty International welcomed the joint statement's emphasis on such reform, but warned that this must be followed up by concrete action.*

*The international community is still waiting for Indonesia to bring those responsible for the crimes against humanity committed in East Timor in 1999 to justice. A human rights court is due to be set up to conduct such trials, but according to a recent decision by President Megawati, it will only be able to hear cases which occurred during the two months of April and September 1999 and in just three of East Timor's 13 districts.*

*So far, Indonesia has only committed itself to prosecuting five cases. Recent reports suggest that one of these - the killing of Dutch journalist, Sander Thoenes in September 1999 - has been shelved, apparently due to lack of evidence. The Indonesian military is believed to have put pressure on the Attorney General's office to drop the case. All evidence points to the involvement of members of Indonesian army battalion 745 in the murder.*

### **Background**

*In the joint-statement, President Megawati condemned the "barbaric and indiscriminate acts carried out against innocent civilians" in clear reference to the recent attacks in the United States. She also restated a commitment to take a "multi-dimensional approach" to problems in*

*Aceh and Irian Jaya (Papua), through the implementation of special autonomy, respect for human rights, restoration of peace, order and the rule of law and dialogue and reconciliation. Both Presidents agreed to work together to support a "stable and prosperous" East Timor.*

*Among other things, President Bush pledged to secure US\$130 million of bilateral assistance for Indonesia with a special focus on assisting efforts with legal and judicial reform; expand "modest contacts" with the Indonesian military; lift a US embargo on the export of "non-lethal" defense articles and to secure US\$10 million for police training in Indonesia.*

*\ENDS*

public document

\*\*\*\*\*

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web : <http://www.amnesty.org>