

INDONESIA Raid on PDI Office

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On 27 July, just days after the end of high profile ASEAN ministerial meetings in Jakarta, Indonesia, police raided the head office of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) which had been occupied by supporters of ousted PDI leader Megawati Sukarnoputri since June. As on previous occasions when the security forces have moved to suppress public opposition, the raid was characterised by the use of excessive force. Up to 90 individuals are believed to have been wounded and at least 180 have been arrested. There are unconfirmed reports of deaths. The raid led to demonstrations and rioting around Jakarta during which buildings and vehicles were burnt and further clashes occurred between the security forces and demonstrators.

Amnesty International is gravely concerned for the safety of those individuals currently in detention, and those who were wounded, some of whom are believed to be currently in a military hospital. As the authorities continue to move against the pro-Megawati supporters, Amnesty International fears that an official backlash against growing public opposition to the government will lead to a further deterioration of Indonesia's human rights record. To minimise the risks of a worsening human rights situation, the organisation is calling on the Indonesian Government to take immediate action to ensure that all those in detention are not at risk of ill-treatment, that those held for their non-violent activities are immediately and unconditionally released, that clear instructions are given to the security forces not to use excessive force and that no individuals are at risk of harassment or imprisonment for their non-violent opposition to the Indonesian Government. Amnesty International believes that as a matter of priority, the Indonesian Government should provide details about those in detention and those wounded during the raid.

Background

Since June 1996, the PDI office in Jakarta had been occupied by PDI members in support of the party's leader, Megawati Sukarnoputri, who is fighting a government-backed challenge to her leadership. In June, a congress of dissident PDI members was held in Medan, North Sumatra, in direct challenge to the leadership of Megawati who was elected leader of the party for a five year term in 1993. At the end of the congress, Suryadi, deputy speaker of Indonesia's Parliament, was elected leader of the PDI. Demonstrations by members of the PDI in support of Megawati were held during the congress and dozens of demonstrators were injured in clashes with police. It is believed that up to 22 were arrested and five remain in police detention facing charges. Others have since been arrested following demonstrations in support of Megawati in other cities in Indonesia including Bandung. Megawati has announced a legal challenge to the government-backed election

of Suryadi as PDI leader. Her supporters began an occupation of the PDI office in Jakarta and held daily forums outside the office. On 23 July, the Police Resort in Central Jakarta issued a letter to Megawati which stated that the daily forums were against Indonesian laws and regulations because they discredited the government and disturbed the peace. The Indonesian authorities were keen to remove Megawati's supporters from the office, but the media spotlight provided by the July ASEAN meetings led many to speculate that a raid on the office would be delayed until after the meetings. There are also indications that prior to the raid, Indonesia's media, already subject to censorship, was pressured not to continue covering the dispute within the PDI.

The raid

Precise details of what happened during the raid are still emerging but it is believed that around 6 am on 27 July four trucks of individuals wearing PDI clothing and purporting to be supporters of Suryadi, arrived at the party office in Jalan Diponegoro, Central Jakarta. The group began attacking those inside the office grounds with cane sticks and stones, while stones and petrol bombs appear to have also been thrown from the office. Anti-riot troops took no action to prevent the violent actions of the pro-Suryadi group against the PDI members in the office prompting many observers to conclude that the pro-Suryadi group may have been organised by the security forces to attack the PDI office, a tactic used frequently in the past by the Indonesian security forces.

The clash between the two groups lasted about two hours before the police forcibly entered the PDI office by crashing through the gate. A confrontation then followed, with dozens of people in the office being wounded, a number of them seriously. Some inside the PDI office were brought out unconscious. It is believed that 130 Megawati supporters were arrested. Others were taken in six ambulances to hospitals but the news service Agence France Press reported that the large number of individuals wounded meant that some had to be taken to hospitals in police vehicles. Reports indicate that up to 90 people have been wounded, with at least 58 believed to have been taken to hospital, including individuals requiring treatment for concussion and other head injuries. The wounded were believed to have been taken to civilian and military hospitals. Amnesty International is concerned by reports that the families of those in one of Jakarta's military hospitals have been refused permission to meet with their relatives. Human rights lawyers attempting to obtain information about those in two civilian hospitals in Jakarta have been told that they must submit a formal request for information.

Still on 27 July, public anger against the police raid resulted in thousands of individuals gathering around the PDI office. During the afternoon some demonstrators began to throw stones at the police and military personnel present. Police and soldiers then used force to disperse the demonstrators with witnesses claiming that the security forces hit and kicked individuals, in some cases repeatedly. It is believed that dozens of demonstrators sustained injuries. Some of those beaten by the security forces appear to have been merely observing the confrontation.

Following the raid, riots involving thousands of individuals occurred in several areas of Jakarta, resulting in the burning of vehicles and several large buildings and looting. The riots are believed to be the most serious in the city for over two decades. By Sunday 28 July, a large troop presence, including armoured vehicles, had been deployed around Jakarta. On 27 July the Armed Forces stated that 176 individuals were in detention, but on the following day, Jakarta police were

quoted as saying that 181 had been arrested. While Amnesty International recognises the right of the Indonesian authorities to bring to justice anyone who may have been responsible for acts of violence, the organisation is concerned that some of those detained may be being held for their peaceful participation in demonstrations, while all detainees are at risk of ill-treatment in custody. There is no information about where the detainees are being held, whether they are in military or police custody, or whether they have been granted access to lawyers of their own choice.

A further 10 activists were believed to have been arrested on 28 July, as the security forces used force to break up a demonstration near the PDI office. The demonstration of around 200 people was broken up around 11 am as anti-riot troops attacked the demonstrators with cane sticks and teargas. Troops are also believed to have pursued some demonstrators into the grounds of the Indonesian Legal Aid Institute (*Lembaga Bantuan Hukum*) located nearby. Eyewitnesses reported that many of those detained were suffering wounds, while others arrested were merely observing the demonstration. The LBH office was then blockaded by the security forces and by 4.30 pm the same afternoon, police from the Mobile Brigades were still positioned around the office. The response by the security forces to LBH raises serious concerns for the safety of individuals and organisations believed by the authorities to be supporting Megawati's PDI faction. While recognising the right of the Indonesian authorities to bring to justice those individuals responsible for acts of violence, Amnesty International fears that the raid and the subsequent rioting will be used by the authorities as a pretext to justify the launch of a far-reaching crack down on opposition.

There are reports that up to six people may have died, but Amnesty International has been unable to confirm this. The Armed Forces state that there have been two deaths, one a security guard who died as he was attempting to escape a burning building, and another person, believed to be a demonstrator, who the military state died of a heart attack in hospital.¹ Concern that a number of demonstrators may have died is heightened by the fact that the military are restricting access to information concerning those taken to hospital.

As a key first step to avert a further deterioration of the human rights situation in Indonesia, Amnesty International is calling on the Indonesian Government to:

- immediately and unconditionally release any individual detained for the non-violent exercise of their beliefs;
- provide details of the names and location of those taken into custody and those wounded; provide details of the charges facing those in detention;
- allow any individual in detention immediate access to lawyers of their own choice and adequate medical treatment;
- ensure that those detained are not at risk of torture or ill-treatment and that they are treated in accordance with domestic and international standards for detention;

¹AFP, 28 July 1996.

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- issue immediate instructions to the security forces to act in accordance with international standards on the appropriate use of force in dealing with demonstrations.

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