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## **Human rights: The cornerstone of rebuilding Indonesia**

Human rights should be the cornerstone of international assistance to Indonesia, Amnesty International said today.

On 27 and 28 July 1999, the Consultative Group on Indonesia (CGI) -- the grouping of donor governments to Indonesia headed by the World Bank -- will meet in Paris, France, to discuss the provision of aid and loans to the South East Asian country, which remains in transition following the 1997 economic crisis and the end of President Suharto's 30-year rule in 1998.

"Weak institutions and a lack of transparency and accountability in government structures have been at the root of human rights violations in Indonesia and contributed to the nation's economic and political crisis," Amnesty International said.

"It is therefore in the interest of all donor governments, international financial institutions and United Nations agencies, to help rebuild Indonesia through the development of institutions and systems which are open, transparent and participatory."

"The gains of the past year could be lost unless donors support the rebuilding of civil society and the strengthening of human rights protection."

While new political parties, the media and non-governmental organizations in Indonesia are currently enjoying unprecedented freedoms, the political and economic situation remains volatile and a reversion to repression in the face of unrest remains a real possibility.

Some prisoners of conscience and many political prisoners remain in jail, and legislation allowing for the imprisonment of prisoners of conscience remains on the statute books. The torture of detainees continues, security forces still use lethal force, and the legal and structural changes required to bring an end to human rights violations, such as the establishment of an independent judiciary, have not been implemented.

Amnesty International is encouraged that the World Bank has recently expressed concern about the security situation in East Timor, and is urging donors to keep a close eye on the province of Aceh, where dozens of arbitrary detentions, "disappearances" and unlawful killings have recently been committed during military counter-insurgency operations.

"Money used to create a functioning judiciary which treats all before it equally, to ensure that law enforcement agencies act within the framework of the law, and to support legislation which conforms to international human rights standards, will be money well spent," Amnesty International said.

Political stability is required for Indonesia's economic recovery, but genuine stability cannot be achieved without full protection of the freedoms of association, expression and organization.

“The international community should also ensure that donor programs enable all Indonesians to participate genuinely in their own country’s development without fear,” Amnesty International said.

The new government which will take office later this year should be encouraged to follow through and build upon the human rights initiatives launched by President Habibie, including the release of some prisoners of conscience and political prisoners, investigations into some “disappearances” and political killings, and giving the East Timorese people the right to self-determination by voting on the territory’s future status in a United Nations-sponsored “popular consultation”.

Amnesty International is urging the CGI to establish mechanisms to ensure that any aid or loans are properly monitored according to key principles of participation, accountability, consultation, transparency, and that human rights is made a cornerstone of any loans or aid offered to Indonesia during this meeting.

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