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Indonesia: Address Aceh pre-election violence

Amnesty International calls on the Indonesian authorities to stem the rising tide of political violence in Aceh province ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections on 9 April 2014. An increase in the number of police personnel deployed to the province, in the lead up to the elections, has failed to deter a spate of lethal shootings and attacks against members and supporters of political parties and other individuals.

In the latest incident of violence on 1 April 2014, three people were killed, including an 18-month old child, in Bireun district's Geulanggang village, when unknown gunmen on motorcycles fired live ammunition at a minibus in which the three were traveling. The minibus had the image of an Aceh Party (PA) legislative candidate on its side.

Earlier this year, on 2 March, unknown gunmen shot dead Faisal, a legislative candidate from the Aceh National Party (PNA), near South Aceh's Meukek sub-district. The month before, on 6 February, two men beat to death Yuwaini, the PNA's head in Kuta Makmur sub-district, North Aceh.

Amnesty International calls on the authorities to undertake a prompt, impartial and thorough investigation into these killings and attacks and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Indonesia is a state party, the government must protect the right to life and security of individuals.

The Indonesian authorities must also ensure that all persons are able to effectively exercise their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and thereby are able to participate in the election campaign freely and without intimidation.

All political candidates in Aceh should publically commit to end human rights abuses and call on their supporters not to commit political violence against supporters of other political factions.

Elections in Aceh have been marked by violence since the signing of the Helsinki MOU in 2005 that led to the end of the conflict. The violence is believed to be related mainly to the rivalry between factions of the former armed pro-independence, Free Aceh Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, GAM).

The Aceh conflict between GAM and the Indonesian government dated back to 1976, and peaked during military operations from 1989 until 2005.

The conflict took a brutal toll on the population there, leaving between 10,000 and 30,000 dead, many of them civilians. Both sides committed human rights abuses during the conflict, many of which constitute crimes under international law and may amount to war crimes. Human rights violations committed by the Indonesian security forces may amount to crimes against humanity.

Amnesty International believes that the failure by the government to address past human rights abuses committed during the conflict in Aceh has perpetuated a climate of impunity that contributes to mob and vigilante violence in the province.

The organization urges all political parties and candidates in Aceh to put human rights and combating impunity at the heart of the election campaign. Until there is truth, justice and full reparations for victims of

the conflict and their families, there will be continued mistrust in the administration of justice in Aceh, which will further perpetuate the cycle of human rights abuses.