

## **Indonesia/ASEAN: Human rights are part of the security equation**

*Amnesty International today called on Foreign Ministers attending this ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meeting in Hanoi next week to acknowledge that human rights are part of the regional security equation, and specifically to address the grave human rights situation in Indonesia.*

*As the ARF is now reported to be preparing a series of measures to strengthen its ability to address security issues in the region, the Hanoi meeting is an opportunity to impress on the Indonesian government its responsibility to protect the human rights of its citizens and explore alternatives to repression to resolve its political problems.*

*"A population which is subjected to the levels of terror currently being experienced in the Indonesian provinces of Aceh and Papua are likely to resist or flee. Both scenarios pose a threat to national and regional stability," Amnesty International said.*

*Following the launch of a new military operation in May, thousands of people are reported to have fled their homes in Central Aceh District to escape fighting between the Indonesian security forces and the pro-independence armed group, the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). Since June over 100 people have been killed in the district. Many of the dead are believed to be civilians.*

*The conflict there has taken on an ethnic dimension. Recent warnings from GAM for non-Acehnese to leave the province and attacks on Javanese settlers have exacerbated the tension. In response to the latest military operations GAM has also threatened to step up attacks on military and police installations in the area. Javanese settlers in the*

district are reported to have formed militia groups and, according to one local NGO, have participated in attacks by the Indonesian security forces on Acehnese and indigenous Gayo people.

"As one atrocity after another is reported, the conflict takes on a life of its own and people are forced to take sides. To bring an end to this cycle, the Indonesian government should be introducing confidence building measures, including timely and credible justice for the victims and their families," Amnesty International said.

In Papua, like Aceh, a greater degree of tolerance of pro-independence sentiment which had characterised the early months of President Wahid's term in office, has been replaced by a hardline approach by the authorities. Although members of the armed independence group are said to be the target, ordinary civilians and peaceful political activists are often the victims.

Hubertus Wresman, a Sunday-school teacher from Jayapura District, was taken from his home by masked armed men believed to be members of the Special Forces Command (Kopassus) on 25 June. Although on this occasion, the military commander in Papua is cooperating with NGO investigations, Hubertus is still missing.

Amnesty International has long argued that human rights violations have been the root cause of much instability and violence in Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia, East Timor, the Philippines and Myanmar. It has repeatedly called on ASEAN and ARF to address human rights at their meetings on regional security.

### **Background**

Widespread and systematic human rights violations have been perpetrated in both Aceh and Papua for many years in the context of

counter-insurgency operations by the Indonesian security forces against GAM in Aceh and the armed Free Aceh Movement (OPM) in Papua.

In the months following President Suharto's resignation in May 1998 there was some respite from the violations. In Aceh the military withdrew some of its troops and a series of investigations into past violations were initiated. A peace dialogue was pursued between the Indonesian government and GAM which has resulted in several agreements since June 2000 aimed at suspending military operations by both sides. The agreements failed to stem the conflict and both sides continue to commit grave human rights abuses.

In Papua, political overtures have also been made, including support for a Papuan Congress in May 2000 with 500 official delegates from all parts of the province. The Congress ended with the adoption of a resolution in support of independence. The government disassociated itself from the result and immediately afterwards a number of prominent Papuan leaders were questioned. Since June 2000 thousands of new troops have been sent to the province and there is now a ban on even peaceful support for Papuan independence.

Although investigations have been carried out in both Aceh and Papua, there has only been one trial since the beginning of the year 2000 of military officials accused of committing violations. In the single case, one civilian and 24 members of the military were found guilty of killing a Muslim cleric and some 50 of his followers in West Aceh in July 1999. The trial did not meet with international standards for fair trial. In the meantime, thousands of other cases have not been addressed.

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