

25 September 2000

AI Index ASA 21/047/2000 - News Service Nr. 182

### **Indonesia: Aceh situation worsening, human rights groups warn**

*Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch today warned that the Indonesian government's failure to address a rapidly deteriorating security situation in Aceh is leading to a huge increase in human rights violations.*

*"Abductions, torture, and unlawful killings are taking place on a daily basis throughout Aceh. Civilian authority has all but collapsed, and no one in Jakarta seems to be paying serious attention to human rights issues there," the two organizations said.*

*"Indonesia's financial donors already have the problems in West Timor on the agenda for their annual meeting in October; they urgently need to add Aceh."*

*The two leading international human rights monitoring organizations called for the immediate suspension from duty of any member of the police or military, including commanders, suspected of involvement in, tolerating or condoning human rights violations. They also called for the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry, comprised of human rights experts, to investigate recent violations and for suspects to be brought to justice in trials which meet international standards for fairness.*

*There has been a notable increase in the targeting of human rights defenders, humanitarian workers and political activists in recent weeks -- the Police Mobile Brigade (Brimob) in particular have been implicated in many of the latest violations.*

The Indonesian Government and the armed opposition group, the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka or GAM), have committed to protecting humanitarian workers under the terms of the ceasefire known as the "humanitarian pause" but attacks on civilians have continued. The agreement was extended on 24 September to run until 15 January 2001.

"Extending the ceasefire agreement with the GAM means little if no one in the Wahid government can prevent Indonesian security forces from torturing and killing ordinary civilians" the organizations said.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch noted that frequent attacks by the armed opposition group on Indonesian military and police targets did present legitimate security concerns for the government, but the response of the security forces was counterproductive.

"Protecting human rights is an essential prerequisite to finding a durable solution to the conflict in Aceh. The targeting of respected civilians is only going to intensify resentment of central government rule and increase instability," concluded Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Recent violations in which Brimob involvement has been reported include:

\*\* On 19 September, two student activists with Sira, a group that advocates a referendum on Aceh's political status, were beaten with rifle butts, cable and belts and threatened with knives by members of Brimob after being seized at gunpoint in Banda Aceh.

\*\* On 16 September, respected academic Dr. Safwan Idris, rector of the Ar-raniry State Islamic Institute (IAIN) in Banda Aceh, was

assassinated at his home. Dr. Safwan Idris had been an advocate of a non-violent resolution to the conflict in Aceh and was a candidate for governor. The motorcycle used by the gunmen was reported to have been seen entering a Brimob complex.

*\*\* On 27 August, three staff of Oxfam working in South Aceh were hospitalised after being tortured by Brimob officers. All three were beaten. One had a fingernail pulled out and was burned with cigarettes.*

According to government statistics, 40 civilians and 21 members of the security forces have been killed since the "humanitarian pause" went into effect in early June. Figures on civilian deaths from non-government organizations are much higher.

The two organizations urged both sides to uphold their commitments to protect humanitarian workers and to extend this commitment to ensure human rights protection for all civilians in Aceh.

### **Background**

The annual meeting of the Consultative Group on Indonesia (CGI), a donor group convened by the World Bank, is scheduled to take place in Tokyo on 18 and 19 October 2000. The World Bank President, James Wolfensohn has warned Indonesia to bring pro-Indonesian militia operating in West Timor under control before the meeting. The warning follows the killing of three international staff at the offices of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Atambua, West Timor by militia in early September. All repatriation and humanitarian operations for over 100,000 East Timorese refugees in West Timor have been suspended since the killings.

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