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## **East Timor: Failure to curb continuing violence threatens long-term stability**

The consistent failure of the Indonesian authorities to guarantee the safety and security for all East Timorese in the run up to the ballot on 30 August poses a dangerous precedent for the future of the troubled territory, Amnesty International said today at the launch of its latest report.

"Despite improvements in some areas of East Timor, serious human rights violations -- including unlawful killings, arbitrary arrests and "disappearances" -- continue to occur and are seriously undermining implementation of the popular consultation process," Amnesty International said.

"Under these conditions many East Timorese are still unable to participate fully in the popular consultation process or are only able to do so at considerable risks to themselves."

Although there are some reports of intimidation by pro-independence groups and allegations of abuses by the pro-independence armed opposition group, the East Timorese National Liberation Army (*Forças Armadas de Libertacao Nacional de Timor*, Falintil), the pro-integration militia groups are continuing to commit the majority of human rights violations acting with almost total impunity and with the support of the Indonesian National Army (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*, TNI) and the police.

In one incident on 26 July in the Mercado Lama market place in Dili, several pro-independence supporters as well as ordinary members of the public were injured in clashes with members of Aitarak militia group. One eyewitness reported seeing a person being beaten by a militia member in front of the police mobile brigade (Brimob) who had arrived to secure the area but who took no action to prevent the beating.

"By failing to control the militia groups and bringing to justice those responsible for human rights violations, the Indonesian authorities are jeopardising the safety of the East Timorese people and the possibility of a smooth transition to special autonomy within Indonesia or to independence," Amnesty International added.

Both domestic and international monitoring groups observing the popular consultation process in East Timor have reported systematic and widespread harassment and intimidation of voters by militias, the TNI and local government officials. Death threats and house to house visits by militias and members of the TNI to record the names of those who have registered are among some of the intimidatory methods used.

Among the most vulnerable are the tens of thousands of internally displaced people (IDPs) forced to flee their homes as a result of actions by the militia groups and who are unable to return to their homes because the Indonesian authorities have so far not guaranteed their

security. Others, including members of the pro-independence organization, the National Council of Timorese Resistance (*Conselho Nacional da Resistência Timorese*, CNRT), students and human rights defenders are also still at risk.

Threats and attacks against international and local staff of the United Nations Mission to East Timor (UNAMET) have also contributed to the atmosphere of insecurity. Sporadic incidents during the 22 day registration process caused several centres to close temporarily -- in the last 48 hours of the registration process alone, three separate militia attacks took place, injuring UNAMET staff and students, damaging property and forcing the temporary closure of a number of centres.

"Pressure must be maintained on the Indonesian authorities, in particular the military, to ensure that they fulfil their obligation to provide security for the people of East Timor during the popular consultation process."

At the same time Amnesty International urges the UN, Portugal and Indonesia in particular and the international community in general, to ensure that security arrangements for the immediate post ballot period are agreed and in place by the time the vote takes place.

"The UN must be given the required resources, expertise and support to fulfil its role during this and the longer term transition period and must ensure that human rights protection is central to all arrangements."

"Polling day marks the beginning and not the end of the transition for East Timor. Ensuring security and protecting human rights must remain a priority throughout the post ballot and transition phases in order to avoid any more blood being spilt."

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