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Indonesia/East Timor: UN must ensure safety of local staff

As the United Nations (UN) prepares to withdraw its last staff members from East Timor's capital, Dili, within 24 hours, Amnesty International appealed to the UN to ensure the safety of all East Timorese who assisted in the popular consultation process.

“Local UNAMET staff are clear targets -- at least four have already been killed by militias,” Amnesty International said. “If the UN cannot ensure their protection, they and their families should be evacuated.”

The United Nations Assistance Mission to East Timor (UNAMET) headquarters in Darwin, Australia, confirmed on 8 September that arrangements are being made to withdraw staff from the UN compound in Dili, and that they hoped to be able to include local staff on evacuation flights.

Indonesian army (TNI) soldiers prevented East Timorese UNAMET staff from boarding an evacuation flight from Baucau on Tuesday.

“TNI troops must not prevent safe passage from East Timor for UNAMET staff -- be they international or East Timorese,” Amnesty International said.

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