

AI INDEX: ASA 21/188/99

EMBARGOED UNTIL 16 OCTOBER 1999

Asian NGOs call for justice and respect for human rights in Indonesia and East Timor

Fifty Asian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in a statement published in the Jakarta press today called on the Indonesian authorities to end the long chain of impunity for those responsible for human rights violations in East Timor and Indonesia.

The NGOs said that the East Timor crisis highlighted fundamental issues about the rule of law and accountability of the military of relevance to Indonesia and all Asian societies.

"We want Indonesia to stand proud in the international community, but fundamental change is needed along with a reckoning for the past."

Representing people throughout Asia, the 50 NGOs* -- including Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, Philippine Solidarity for East Timor and Indonesia, South Asian Forum for Human Rights, Asian Human Rights Commission and Amnesty International sections in 13 Asian countries -- have joined together to help in the struggle for justice and human rights within Indonesia and East Timor.

Reflecting on their own experiences with unjust laws, the organizations expressed their solidarity with NGOs and individuals in Indonesia who are campaigning against the adoption of security legislation which violates international human rights standards.

The NGOs stressed the need for the Indonesian government to allow humanitarian agencies and independent monitors unrestricted and unhindered access to the displaced East Timorese in West Timor and other parts of Indonesia.

They also urged the Indonesian government to cooperate fully with the UN international commission of inquiry into suspected crimes against humanity in East Timor.

"This is an opportunity for the new Indonesia to show its true commitment to justice and the rule of law," the organizations concluded.

ENDS.../

***Note to editors**

The 50 Asian NGOs come from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand.

For more information or to receive a list of the NGOs that participated in the statement please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on + 44 171 413 5566 or visit our website at <http://www.amnesty.org>