

UA 197/07 Fear for safetyINDONESIA **Albert Rumbekwan (m), human rights activist**

Prominent human rights defender Albert Rumbekwan has received death threats, and has been followed and kept under surveillance. Amnesty International believes his life could be in danger.

He is the director of the National Human Rights Commission (*Komisi Nasional Hak Asasi Manusia*, Komnas HAM) section in Papua province. Since early June, when he met with the UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders, Hina Jilani, he has been receiving mobile phone text messages containing death threats aimed at him and his family. One of these said: "You who already report on the Papuan nation with human rights to destroy the people, you want a proof of the bitterness of the people. The troops will instantly make your ancestors and your children become skin and bones in the Papuan zone of peace."

On 14 June, unknown men kept watch on his office from 8am until 4pm. The men went in and asked staff where he was, but he was out, so they waited in their cars. One of the cars was a black Avanza Kijang LX, and another was a white Kijang Kapsul. They spent all day parked 20m from the office, which intimidated the Komnas HAM staff. A similar car had reportedly been seen earlier that month following Hina Jilani during her visit to Jayapura, Papua province.

According to a local source, on the evening of 24 July "unidentified persons" went to Albert Rumbekwan's house and tried to see inside holding electronic equipment up to a window. Police officers were in the house with him at the time. The police apparently felt "afraid" and told Albert Rumbekwan to prepare himself with "traditional weapons" like a stone or a knife. Police have been monitoring his situation closely since he started to receive death threats however the threats towards Albert have not diminished.

Albert Rumbekwan says he has been followed when travelling by car, and that members of his family have been followed and have been asked where he is. Text messages have been sent, claiming to come from him, to people in Papua telling them to attack police and military offices in the province, so as to achieve a free Papua. Albert denies sending these messages. These messages could put him at risk of violent retribution from the security forces.

The harassment and intimidation of Albert Rumbekwan is typical of the treatment of human rights defenders in Papua since Hina Jilani's visit, and since Colonel Burhanuddin was nominated as military commander in the city of Jayapura (see UA 199/07, ASA 21/009, 3 August 2007).

Colonel Burhanuddin Siagian reportedly said on 12 May: "If I meet anyone who has enjoyed the facilities that belong to the state, but who still betrays the nation, I honestly will destroy him." On 7 July, he reportedly said in the same newspaper, "For the sake of the NKRI [The Unitary Republic of Indonesia] we are not afraid of human rights. It is the TNI's [army] duty to destroy any group wanting to separate from Indonesia, irrespective of what methods they are using to struggle."

He made similar threats towards the Timorese community in 1999, which appear to have led directly to the killing of a number of Timorese civilians. According to the indictments issued by the Special Panel for Serious Crimes of Dili District Court in 2003, Colonel Siagian made public speeches threatening to kill supporters of Timor-Leste's independence, and ordered the killing of seven men in April 1999. Although Colonel Siagian has been indicted twice for crimes against humanity in Timor-Leste, and was named as a suspect in Indonesia's own commission of investigation into the human rights violations which occurred in Timor at the time, he has never faced trial.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There is an active independence movement in Papua province and the Indonesian security forces have responded at times with excessive use of force including extrajudicial executions, torture and arbitrary detentions. Human rights organisations are among those publicly accused of being linked to the independence movement. Members of local human rights organisations have been harassed and intimidated because of their work, and some have been forced to leave the province. Following her visit to Indonesia in June, Hina Jilani stated that human rights defenders working in Papua province "continue to face torture, arbitrary detention and harassment from the country's police, military and security forces."

While Amnesty International takes no position on the political status of any province of Indonesia, Amnesty International believes that the right to freedom of expression includes the right to express political views and that this right must be upheld.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to investigate allegations that Albert Rumbekwan received text message death threats in June and July, that text messages exhorting violence were sent, falsely claiming to come from him, and that he and members of his family have been followed;
- calling for those responsible for the threats and intimidation to be brought to justice;

- urging the authorities to take immediate, concrete measures to guarantee the safety of Albert Rumbekwan;
- urging the authorities to immediately withdraw Col. Siagian from Papua and suspend him from active duty; all military or police officers who have been indicted for crimes against humanity by the Special Panels for Serious Crimes in Timor-Leste should be suspended from active duty pending the outcome of criminal proceedings to determine whether or not they are guilty of the charges against them.
- calling on the authorities to ensure that all members of the police and military are made aware of their responsibility to protect human rights defenders, set out in the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

APPEALS TO (Fax machines may be switched off outside office hours, GMT+7. Please keep trying):

President

Mr Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono
Istana Merdeka, Jakarta 10110, Indonesia

Fax: + 62 21 345 2685
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Email: presiden@ri.go.id

Salutation: Dear President Yudhoyono

COPIES TO:

Chairman, National Commission for Human Rights

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Mr Abdul Hakim Garuda Nusantara, Jl. Latuharhary No. 4B
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and to diplomatic representatives of Indonesia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 October 2007.*****