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MEDIA ADVISORY

INDONESIA: PAYING THE PRICE FOR "STABILITY"

Amnesty International today launches a new report, on the current economic and political crisis in Indonesia. The report highlights the human rights costs of the Indonesian Government's hardline approach to peaceful and violent expressions of dissent and frustration in the run up to the March 1998 Presidential elections and in the face of the country's worst economic crisis in decades.

At a time when the airing of opinions might help to ease the level of tension, the authorities have arrested hundreds of peaceful political activists, and there have been reports of the security forces using excessive force in handling riots which have spread throughout the country. At least five people have reportedly been killed. Amnesty International is also concerned that the government is not taking adequate measures to protect ethnic-Chinese Indonesians who are the target of mob attacks.

Intense activity at the international level from other governments has focused on restoring economic stability with little or no attention being given to the possible human rights implications of the crisis. Amnesty International considers that there is an urgent need for such international intervention to include a human rights element.

The report details:

- **increased repression on freedom of speech and association** - around 250 peaceful critics of the government have been arrested in the last few weeks with over 140 still in custody or facing criminal charges for calling for Indonesian President Suharto to stand down, for putting themselves forward as alternative candidates in the election or for criticising the government's handling of the economic crisis;
- **human rights concerns in the context of the security forces handling of violent disturbances** which have spread throughout the country;
- **attacks against ethnic-Chinese Indonesians.**

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**For a copy of the report, or to arrange an interview, please call:
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