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16 APRIL 1996

INDONESIA: EAST TIMORESE HANDED OVER TO MILITARY BY GERMAN EMBASSY

Amnesty International was appalled at the expulsion today of eight and possibly nine East Timorese from the German Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia, directly into the hands of military officers who beat, kicked and then arrested the group.

“This is the latest incident of foreign embassies in Jakarta failing to take action to protect the rights of East Timorese,” Amnesty International said today.

“The group were handed over to the military, despite ample evidence they might be at risk of torture and ill-treatment.”

The group entered the embassy around 2 am on 16 April, with the intention of seeking asylum. They were reportedly forced out within minutes by embassy security guards and handed over to members of the Indonesian Armed Forces waiting outside. It is believed that the military had been watching the embassy from a nearby building. Plainclothes and uniformed military officers were then observed by eye-witnesses beating and kicking the East Timorese. One of the group was allegedly kicked while on the ground.

The group were all arrested and reportedly taken to the Central Jakarta military command. It is not known how many remain in detention, but it is believed that two may have been released later the same day. Amnesty International is concerned that those remaining in detention are at continued risk of further ill-treatment or torture. It is not known whether they have had access to medical assistance or independent legal counsel.

In December 1995, Amnesty International expressed concern that the Dutch and Russian Governments did not seek sufficient assurances from the Indonesian authorities for the safety of around 118 East Timorese and Indonesian protestors who were expelled from their respective embassies and then taken into police custody. The Dutch Government reportedly expelled around 26 East Timorese after they requested asylum. Some of those handed over were reportedly subjected to ill-treatment and ongoing harassment.

The latest embassy expulsions come as the human rights situation in East Timor is being discussed at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (CHR) in Geneva. In the last two years the CHR has failed to act decisively on East Timor.

“This latest example of continuing human rights violations against East Timorese engaged in political actions highlights the need for the international community to take firm action and adopt a strongly worded resolution on East Timor,” Amnesty International said.

In bodies such as the CHR the international community, including the European Union, has been seeking a consensus approach. Yet this has had a minimal impact on the human rights situation in East Timor and has allowed human rights violations such as torture, ill-treatment and arbitrary arrests to continue.

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