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INDONESIA36 unnamed individuals

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of 36 people who were reportedly arrested in Sorong, Papua (Irian Jaya) after clashes at a pro-independence demonstration. They are currently being held in Sorong "Police Resort" (Polres), where they are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

During the demonstration on 22 August, outside a church in Sorong, around 50 people raised the Papuan flag. Members of the Indonesian Police Mobile Brigade (Brimob) arrived and ordered the protestors to take down the flag. In the clash that followed three people, Mesakh Imbir (35), Obaja Imbir (50) and Asay Imbir (35) were shot dead. Twelve others were injured, several of whom required hospital treatment for bullet wounds. One needed treatment for severe facial injuries after reportedly being beaten by the police.

The police have reportedly stated that they were forced to open fire when they came under attack from the protestors armed with bows, arrows and machetes. However, an eyewitness has denied this, saying that the demonstrators only became violent after the police opened fire without warning.

Local human rights activists requested to see the bodies of those who had been killed, but were prevented from doing so by the police. According to reports, the bodies have now been buried without any autopsies having been carried out.

It is not known whether those arrested have been allowed access to lawyers or their families.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Serious human rights violations, including unlawful killings, arbitrary arrests and torture, continue in Papua during police and military operations against pro-independence activists.

Many of these violations have occurred when the security forces have forcibly dispersed people taking part in flag-raising ceremonies, a local form of protest. Those arrested by the police during such operations are at risk of torture or ill-treatment, which is common for political detainees in Papua.

These violations have continued although the Indonesian government has recently spoken of the need to find a peaceful solution to the problem of Papua's disputed political status.

In June this year, about 3,000 people from all over Papua attended a meeting of the Papua Council, a local body, which declared Papua a sovereign territory and called on the Indonesian authorities to start talks on independence for the region. Some of those who organized the meeting have since been questioned by the police, although none are known to have been formally charged with any offence.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Bahasa Indonesia, English, or your own language:

- asking for guarantees that the 36 people detained in Sorong Polres will not be tortured or ill-treated, and asking that they be given immediate access to their families, lawyers and, if necessary, medical treatment;
- urging the authorities to either charge them with a recognisable criminal offence or release them immediately;
- calling on the authorities to launch an immediate and impartial investigation into the deaths and injuries that occurred at the flag-raising ceremony in Sorong on 22 August;
- urging the authorities to ensure that anyone suspected of committing human rights violations be suspended from duty and brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Brig. Gen. S Y Wenas
Chief of police for Papua
Head of Regional Police Papua
Jl. Sam Ratulangie No. 8
Jayapura, Papua
Indonesia

Telegrams: Police Chief, Jayapura, Papua, Indonesia

Fax: + 62 967 33763

Salutation: Dear Chief of Police

Dr Juwono Sudarsono
Minister of Defence and Security
(Menteri Pertahanan dan Keamanan)
Jl. Medan Merdeka Barat No.13-14
Jakarta Pusat 10110
Indonesia

Telegrams: Dr Juwono Sudarsono, Menteri Pertahanan Dan Keamanan, Jakarta, Indonesia

Faxes: + 62 21 381 4535 / 384 5178

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Mr Hasballah Saad
State Minister of Human Rights Affairs
Jl Kuningan Timur M 2/5
Jakarta 12950
Indonesia

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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 5 October 2000