

INDONESIA East Timorese Refugees in Indonesia

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the security of some 100,000 East Timorese refugees in West Timor following the evacuation of staff from international and national humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the province. The risk to refugees of abuses by members of militia groups operating in the area is greatly heightened by the absence of humanitarian workers and others involved in protecting and assisting the refugees.

There have been unconfirmed reports that refugees were killed on 7 September in the Betun area of West Timor. Other reports, which again cannot be verified, say that over 1,000 refugees have fled from Besikama, Betun District, because of militia activity. The killing in Besikama of militia leader, Olivio Mendoza Moruk, on 5 September 2000, is said to have triggered an attack by militias against staff of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) the following day which left three of its international staff members dead.

UNHCR and other international agencies based in Atambua were evacuated on 6 September after the killings by the militia. Remaining UNHCR staff in Kupang, the provincial capital, evacuated today (8 September). All repatriation operations are now indefinitely suspended. Other international agencies, including Oxfam and Care, have been forced to halt their operations and withdraw staff.

The Indonesian authorities have expressed their regret for the killings of the UNHCR representatives, but have denied responsibility for the deaths. Both military and government officials are reported to have said the militia attack was a product of a local row. A investigation team is said to have been established and there are reports that some people have been arrested in connection with the killings. Additional troops have also been sent to the area.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 30 August 1999, the people of East Timor voted overwhelmingly for independence from Indonesia which had forcibly annexed the territory in 1975. In the months running up to the vote there had been an organized campaign of terror by pro-Indonesian militia against independence supporters. There is overwhelming evidence that the militia were trained, equipped and supported by the Indonesian security forces. It is believed that there is continued support for the militia from within the security forces.

Immediately following the announcement of the results of the vote on 4 September 1999, a wave of violence was unleashed against the population of East Timor. Hundreds of people were killed, including independence activists, nuns, priests and journalists. Others were raped and beaten. Over a quarter of a million people were forcibly expelled or fled to Indonesia.

Efforts to repatriate East Timorese refugees in West Timor have been constantly hampered by threats, intimidation and attacks by militia groups whose members also fled to Indonesia after the Indonesian security forces were forced to withdraw from East Timor by an international military force.

In the weeks running up to the first anniversary of the vote, militia activity intensified in West Timor. On 22 August 2000, UNCHR was forced to temporarily suspend repatriation operations after three of its staff were assaulted while delivering aid to a camp near the town of Kefamenanu.

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

- pointing out that the support and protection of those working with refugees is essential for the safety of the refugees themselves;
- demanding that the authorities take immediate measures to provide security for UNHCR and other international and national agencies involved in assisting and protecting the refugees, in accordance with agreed international standards for the protection of refugees and those who assist them, including an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of the UNHCR staff and the arrest of those responsible and the immediate removal of all known militia members from the refugee camps;
- demanding that the authorities provide guarantees of safe access to all areas of West Timor by national and international human rights monitors.

APPEALS TO:

President

KH Abdurrahman Wahid
President RI
Istana Merdeka
Jakarta 10110
Indonesia

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Salutation: Dear President

Commander of the armed forces (TNI)

Admiral Widodo Adisucipto
Panglima TNI
Markas Besar TNI
Jl. Medan Merdeka Barat No 13
Jakarta Pusat
Indonesia

Fax: +62 21 380 6711/ +62 21 36 1471/+62 21 37 8144 /+62 21 35 6404

Salutation: Dear Admiral

COPIES TO:

Military Commander Region IX/Udayana

(covers Bali, Lombok, West Timor)
Maj. Gen. Kiki Syahnakri
Pangdam IX/Udayana
Markas Besar KODAM IX/Udayana
Denpasar
Bali
Indonesia

Salutation: Dear Major General

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 20 October 2000.