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INDONESIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS GOVERNMENT CRACKDOWN

Amnesty International today strongly condemned the recent detentions and possible deliberate killings of opposition activists by Indonesian security forces. The organization expressed its grave concern for the safety of those detained, and called on the government to halt any further arbitrary arrests of peaceful demonstrators.

The detentions follow the 27 July police raid on the office of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) in Jakarta. Since then, up to 241 people have been arrested, around 90 injured in sporadic clashes between police and demonstrators, and there are reports that up to seven people may have been killed. The military is restricting access to the injured, making the exact numbers difficult to assess and true figures could be higher than those given out by the government.

“The government should immediately release anyone detained for peaceful activities, and allow those injured and detained unrestricted access to their families and lawyers,” Amnesty International said. “This is their right under Indonesian law, and until this happens the government will be directly responsible for any ill-treatment they suffer as a result.”

Since Sunday, the Indonesian Government has issued threats against individuals and members of non-governmental organizations which they allege have played a role in the riots. Amnesty International fears that these comments could be used as a pretext for widespread arrests of political activists. The latest threats came earlier today, with the announcement by the military of a “shoot-to-kill” policy for any further trouble-makers.

On 28 July Lieutenant-General Syarwan Hamid was quoted as saying that the actions of the rioters were similar to those of the banned Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), and accused supporters of the demonstration and riots of subversion. The linking of non-governmental organizations and individuals to the PKI is a common tactic employed by the Indonesian authorities to discredit them and to justify reprisals such as arrests. There have already been reports that some individuals have been followed by, or received threatening “visits” from, people believed to be linked to the military.

“Allegations of this kind against individuals and organizations are a blatant threat to their safety and physical wellbeing,” Amnesty International said. “The recent civil unrest should not be used by the government as a pretext for a witchhunt of opposition activists.”

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Further information on Amnesty International's concerns on the PDI raid is contained in two reports (AI Index: ASA 21/46/96 and ASA 21/48/96). For copies of these reports or to arrange an interview, please call:

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