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Indonesia: Armed forces must show restraint

Amnesty International today issued a direct appeal to the Indonesian armed forces to show utmost restraint in dealing with mass demonstrations calling for President Suharto to step down, and called on foreign governments to send observers to the rallies.

“Last week’s killings at Trisakti University underline the urgent need for the armed forces to maintain discipline and restraint,” Amnesty International said. “There are more reports today of injuries and without restraint, tomorrow could potentially see greatly increased bloodshed.”

“ABRI has a clear duty to protect the fundamental human rights of Indonesia’s people. Military commanders must issue clear orders concerning the use of force and grant unimpeded access to domestic and international human rights monitors and journalists.”

“Any security force units or personnel implicated in previous human rights violations such as the recent killings and ‘disappearances’, should be immediately suspended from duty,” the organization added.

Amnesty International called on foreign governments to send a strong message to the armed forces by continuing to press for restraint, and by sending embassy staff to the rallies to visibly show their presence monitoring the situation.

The human rights organization also criticized proposed reform package announced earlier today by President Suharto as too limited and unlikely to bring about real political stability and respect for human rights.

“This package does not go far enough to meet popular demands for reform and is completely silent on human rights,” Amnesty International said. “For any reform process to have credibility, it must be open, transparent and involve the participation of a diversity of opinions, including opposition groups and human rights organizations.”

“The proposed package looks like mere tinkering with an authoritarian and discredited system, rather than the deep-rooted reforms necessary to ensure that Indonesia moves out of crisis.”

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