

AI INDEX: ASA 21/60/95

EMBARGOED UNTIL 0001 HRS GMT 13 DECEMBER 1995

INDONESIA: AS INDONESIA COMMEMORATES THE ROLE OF WOMEN THE GOVERNMENT STILL FAILS TO PROTECT WOMEN'S RIGHTS

As Indonesia approaches *Hari Ibu* on 22 December -- the day on which it commemorates the country's first women's congress -- Amnesty International today is calling on the Indonesian Government to stop violating the human rights of women in Indonesia and East Timor.

"There is a striking gap between the Indonesian government's pronouncements on the protection of women's rights at the international level and the grim realities on the ground," the organization said.

Amnesty International today released its first report on violations against women in Indonesia and East Timor. The report documents cases of political imprisonment, restrictions on labour activists, rape and torture of women in detention, ill-treatment of suspected prostitutes, extrajudicial executions and the death penalty. The report also looks at how impunity enjoyed by members of the Indonesian security forces contributes to human rights violations against women.

The Indonesian Government has defended the right of women to enjoy "*inalienable human rights as recognised by the international community*" in an international human rights meeting. Sadly, these rights do not seem to be recognized by the Indonesian Government itself.

"Women in poor, isolated communities, with limited access to independent lawyers or human rights groups are frequently at risk of human rights violations," Amnesty International said. "This makes them particularly vulnerable to abuse by security forces and less likely to report violations or seek justice."

Others at risk include labour activists, those opposed to development projects, and religious activists or alleged supporters of separatist movements. Women activists seeking to defend the human rights of others are also at risk of harassment and imprisonment.

Two labour and human rights activists were arbitrarily detained and questioned on 22 November in Jakarta, merely for associating with another known human rights and democracy activist. An East Timorese woman, Felesmina dos Santos Conceição, was released from prison in October, after serving four years of a five-year sentence for distributing military documents containing an interview with the East Timor Governor and information about the schedule and accommodation of a Portuguese parliamentary delegation to East Timor.

Women seeking to protect their social and economic rights are frequently subjected to human rights violations including arbitrary detention, torture and imprisonment.

"It is only when the rights of women not to be arbitrarily detained, tortured, killed, or "disappeared" are guaranteed that women's socio-economic rights and their right to development can be achieved," Amnesty International said.

The shame frequently felt by those women who are raped and sexually harassed in military and police detention means that these violations are often not reported.

"A greater responsibility should be placed on the Indonesian Government to ensure transparency in all forms of security detention -- all women in detention should have access to lawyers of their own choice and women guards should be present at all times." Amnesty International said.

Women suffer violations because members of the security forces are not held to account for their actions. The widows in Aceh and East Timor whose husbands were killed or "disappeared" by the security forces have never been told by the government what happened to their husbands or received compensation. They still live in a climate of fear, making them reluctant to talk to outsiders.

Other women who suffered rape, torture, imprisonment and unfair trial for their alleged links to the Indonesian Communist Party in the 1960s, still bear the scars of their torture and treatment. They conceal their identities because of continuing restrictions on former prisoners yet those who committed the violations were never brought to justice.

Two months after governments adopted a Platform for Action to protect women's rights at the UN Conference on Women in Beijing, the responsibility on the Indonesian Government is even stronger.

"The Indonesian Government should ensure an end to human rights violations against women and that particular mechanisms are put in place to enable women to report human rights violations. The government should also ensure that members of the security forces who violate women's rights are brought to justice," Amnesty International said.

ENDS\