

8 December 2000

AI Index ASA 21/073/2000 - News Service Nr. 232

## **Indonesia: Government must curb attacks by security forces against aid workers**

### *Joint Statement*

*Amnesty International*

*Human Rights watch*

*In a joint statement today, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International condemned the execution-style killings by Indonesian police of three humanitarian aid volunteers and a torture victim in Aceh. The two leading global rights monitors called for the immediate arrest and prosecution of the security officers responsible for the killings.*

*"The Indonesian government is allowing its security forces to target humanitarian workers in Aceh, just as it allowed militias to target such workers in West Timor," the two human rights organizations said.*

*"The international community should be every bit as outraged over these executions as they were over the brutal killing of three United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) workers in September, and take equally firm action."*

*The organizations noted that the government of President Abdurrahman Wahid only began to take steps to curb militia violence in West Timor after the UNHCR killings prompted a strong UN Security Council resolution and veiled threats of economic sanctions. In Aceh, the*

systematic targeting of activists by security forces has been underway for months, but the international response thus far has been muted.

Four humanitarian workers who were travelling to pick up torture victims for rehabilitation treatment in the vicinity of Cot Mat Tahe village, North Aceh district on 6 December were stopped by plainclothes Indonesian security forces. They were transferred to other vehicles and tortured. One volunteer escaped but the other three were lined up on the road and shot in the head execution-style. According to the reports, a patient accompanying the volunteers was also killed in the incident. Initial reports indicate that the Police Mobile Brigade (Brimob) and the military (TNI) were involved.

The volunteers were all local staff members of an organization called Rehabilitation Action for Torture victims in Aceh (RATA), a group sponsored by the Danish government through its embassy in Jakarta. There are now serious concerns for the safety of RATA's other staff and volunteers, especially the witness to the incident who is now in hiding.

The two organizations call on the Indonesian government to immediately initiate an investigation into the incident and to bring those responsible to justice. In view of the apparent involvement of the security forces in the killings any investigation must be carried out by experts who are independent of both the police and the military if it is to be regarded as credible.

Both Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International also demanded that the security forces, including Brimob, be under orders to comply with international human rights standards and that any of its members, including commanding officers, suspected of involvement in human rights violations be immediately suspended from duty. Brimob which, although a police unit, is military in character and has been implicated in many recent violations in Aceh.

Acehnese human rights defenders, humanitarian workers and political activists have been the specific target of many of the violations in recent months. In a letter sent on 22 November 2000, experts of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights noted a "pattern of serious human rights violations" in Aceh including torture, extrajudicial executions of civilians, and death threats against human rights organizations personnel and called for investigation and prosecution of the crimes.

"These latest murders underline the urgency of the UN expert's call for action by Jakarta to end attacks against the Acehnese population and for immediate measures to be taken to protect humanitarian and other human rights defenders." the rights groups concluded.

### **Background**

Active armed groups in Aceh have mounted numerous attacks on police and military personnel, leading government forces to step up counter-insurgency operations. Hundreds of unlawful killings and arbitrary arrests of civilians have taken place in the process. Recent violations in which Brimob involvement has been reported include:

\*On 19 September 2000, two student activists with SIRA, a group that advocates a referendum on Aceh's political status, were beaten with rifle butts, cable, and belts and threatened with knives members of Brimob after being seized at gunpoint in Banda Aceh.

\* On 5 September 2000, Amrisaldin, a volunteer with a humanitarian organization, Save Emergency for Aceh (SEFA), was detained by members of Brimob in Meukek Sub-district. He was released the next day having been punched, kicked, slashed with a knife. He was also

threatened with death and had his pubic, chest and armpit hair burnt with matches.

\* On 27 August 2000, three staff of Oxfam working in South Aceh were hospitalised after being tortured by Brimob officers. All three were beaten. One had a fingernail pulled out and was burned with cigarettes.

\ENDS

public document

\*\*\*\*\*

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web : <http://www.amnesty.org>