

UA 218/99

Fear for**INDONESIA** Iskandar Amin, Village Head  
Asnawi

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the two men named above, who are in police custody in the province of Aceh, northern Sumatra. They are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Iskandar Amin, the village head of Meunasah Raya Village, Trienggadeng-Panteraja Sub-district, Pidie District, was arrested by members of the Police Mobile Brigade (Brimob) at around midday on 20 August 1999, as he was going to the village mosque to pray. He was accused of being a member of the armed opposition group *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM), Free Aceh Movement, and taken to the Police Resort (Polres) in Sigli, Pidie District, where it is believed he is being denied access to his family.

The following day, Brimob went to Tampui Village, also in Trienggadeng-Panteraja Sub-district, and began to dig up the garden of Tgk M Husen, an Islamic scholar, claiming that they had learned when interrogating Iskandar Amin that Tgk M Husen was storing weapons for GAM. They failed to find any weapons, or Tgk M Husen, but arrested Asnawi, Tgk M Husen's son-in-law. The police in Pidie are reported to have said that Asnawi was detained because Tgk M Husen was not at home, and that they believed his son-in-law knew about the storage of weapons.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Since late 1998, serious human rights violations in Aceh have increased in the course of TNI counter-insurgency operations against GAM. Dozens of people have been arrested in recent months on suspicion of links to GAM. Suspects detained by the TNI and the PPRM, (*Petugas Penindak Rusuh Massa*), a riot-control police unit, are often denied access to lawyers of their choice, and are at risk of torture or ill-treatment. Many of those taken into custody have "disappeared" or been unlawfully killed by the security forces.

Since late 1998 the security forces in Aceh have unlawfully killed large numbers of people. On 23 July, at least 45 people, and possibly as many as 70 were killed by the TNI during counter-insurgency operations in Beutong Sub-district, West Aceh. The TNI claimed that those killed were members of GAM, but eyewitnesses and human rights groups deny this and claim that the people who died were unarmed and that they were executed by the TNI.

Human rights workers claim that at least four civilians were killed when the PPRM attacked a camp site in Bintang Kala village, Nisam Sub-district, North Aceh, on 7 August. The PPRM, who were reportedly searching the area for GAM members, came across a camp of civilians who were in the area searching for wood, and suspected that they were members of GAM. Three others reportedly taken into PPRM custody were later released, apparently bearing marks of ill-treatment.

GAM have also been accused of committing human rights abuses.

On 30 July 1999, President Habibie announced that he had established an Independent Investigation Commission on Violence in Aceh (*Komisi Independen Pengusutan Tindak Kekerasan di Aceh*). The Commission is expected to conduct investigations into human rights violations that have occurred since August

1998, and to submit a report within six months, including recommendations on legal measures, rehabilitation and reconciliation. The commission is apparently made up of 27 people, including members of Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academics and government representatives.

However, the commission has not been given a mandate to investigate human rights violations, which occurred during TNI counter-insurgency operations between 1989 and 1998. Amnesty International believes that the commission can only be effective if it is given unrestricted access to all areas of Aceh to conduct full and independent investigations into all human rights violations including those since 1989, if its findings are made public, and if its report leads to the prosecution of those found responsible.

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

- urging the authorities to ensure that the two are not at risk of torture or ill-treatment and that they are immediately released if they are not to be charged with a recognisably criminal offence;
- urging the authorities to ensure that both Iskandar Amin and Asnawi have immediate and continuing access to legal counsel of their choice and to their families;

**APPEALS TO (Please note that fax tones can be difficult to obtain):**

Minister of Defence and Security

Gen. Wiranto

Menteri Pertahanan dan Keamanan

Jl. Medan Merdeka Barat No.13-14

Jakarta 10110

Indonesia

**Faxes:+ 62 21 381 4535 / 384 5178**

**Salutation:Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

President

President Jusuf Habibie

Presiden RI

Istana Negara

Jalan Veteran

Jakarta Pusat

Indonesia

**Faxes:+ 62 21 3904541/526 8726**

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 7 October 1999.