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East Timor: Reports of hampered investigations and alleged extrajudicial executions strengthen the need for an international independent inquiry

Darwin -- Amnesty International is concerned about reports of lack of co-operation by the Indonesian authorities into on-going investigations of killings in East Timor, including that of murdered Dutch journalist Sander Thoenes.

"Indonesia's past record into investigating human rights violations leaves a lot to be desired," Amnesty International said. "If Indonesian authorities are going to be involved, they should not try to block any investigations, intimidate witnesses or destroy evidence."

According to recent reports, retreating TNI forces extrajudicially executed seven people, including two Catholic nuns, Sisters Erminia Cazzanaige and Celeste de Carvalho, together with Fathers Bernardo and Jacinto, who were killed between Baucau and Los Palos around 26 or 27 September.

These reports, while still unconfirmed by Amnesty International, are consistent with a pattern of unlawful killings believed to have taken place throughout the whole of East Timor. They are also consistent with the wider picture of the specific targeting of high risk groups, such as religious workers, by TNI and militia forcing them to flee into West Timor.

"These incidents again highlight the urgent need for the UN Secretary General to ensure credible investigations into suspected crimes

against humanity and war crimes are independent, credible and effective," Amnesty International said. "Immediate steps must be taken by UNAMET and INTERFET to secure evidence and ensure protection for witnesses until proper investigations can take place."

The above reports only serve to strengthen the following Amnesty International concerns:

ü The UN Secretary General must ensure that the Commission of Inquiry, called for by the UN Commission on Human Rights, is genuinely international, able to act independently of the Indonesian government and national institutions, and is given the necessary resources and expertise.

ü In relation to evidence that might indicate violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law committed in a systematic manner, UNAMET and INTERFET should:

ü secure these sites;

ü ensure that timely exhumations and investigations are carried out by forensic and other experts;

ü ensure that evidence is preserved, not only for investigation purposes, but also for any judicial action to be carried out against those responsible in national courts, under the principle of universal jurisdiction, or under a specially created international tribunal;

ü ensure protection for witnesses.

Examples like these show the urgent need for evidence to be collected now.

ENDS.../

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Brazil -- 7th Anniversary of Carandiru massacre: contempt and neglect for 111 lives

The appalling delay in bringing those responsible for the Carandiru massacre to justice underscores the contempt and neglect in which prisoners are held in Brazil, Amnesty International said on the eve of the 7th anniversary of the incident.

The organization called upon the Brazilian authorities not to let the police, who killed 111 prisoners seven years ago, get away scot-free.

"The Carandiru massacre was one of the most horrific incidents ever documented by Amnesty International in Brazil," said Fiona Macaulay, researcher on the country.

"It is incredible that seven years on, not a single policeman has been brought to justice. The Brazilian authorities must confront the issue of impunity as a key step to ending the killing and torture of prisoners."

Military police stormed Latin America's largest prison, the Casa da Detenção (popularly known as Carandiru) in São Paulo state on 2 October 1992 after a riot broke out. When they withdrew after an 11 hour killing spree, 111 inmates were left dead.

The officer commanding the operation was subsequently elected to political office, choosing the number 111 as his electoral ticket. The courts have not yet decided whether or not he should be charged. Eighty-five other policemen were not charged until March 1998.

Every year prisoners die at the hands of police, guards or other prisoners, or from sheer medical neglect. But the Brazilian authorities do not know who they are, how many they are, or what could have been done to prevent their deaths.

Amnesty International is currently engaged in an international campaign for a complete structural overhaul to Brazil's penal system. As part of that campaign, a delegation from the organization's International Secretariat will be visiting Brazil from 4-8 October to discuss concrete measures for reform with the authorities.

As well as calling for a strategy to tackle impunity, the delegation will be urging the setting up of an inspection and monitoring system to expose and prevent human rights violations against detainees. ENDS.../

Amnesty International's latest report on Brazil -- *No One Here Sleeps Safely*, published in June -- highlights pockets of good practice in the country but also reveals that tens of thousands of Brazilian detainees are held in inhumane and life-threatening conditions, and are at constant risk of violent death and torture. For more information please call Amnesty International's press office on +44 171 413 5566 or visit our website at <http://www.amnesty.org>