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MEDIA UPDATE

Human rights situation in West Timor

“It is ironic that the East Timorese people, who voted for independence from Indonesia, are now at the mercy of a government that has forced them into its own territory, only to continue terrorizing them” – Amnesty International

(Darwin) -- The following reports have been received by Amnesty International from West Timor (although these are still unconfirmed by the organization, the sources are considered to be reliable):

- In Stadium Gor, the largest refugee camp in Kupang, food is being denied to those refugees who have expressed a wish to return to East Timor.
- Two boats carrying East Timorese people from the Stadium Gor camp left for Kalimantan and Irian Jaya on 27 September. It is unclear as to whether these people were forced to go or whether they “volunteered”. However, under the current circumstances it is unlikely that they would have access to the necessary information, or indeed the opportunity to make this choice freely. It is also not known whether the Indonesian authorities intend to provide them with the choice, or the facilities, for their return to East Timor at a future date.
- There are reports of ongoing recruitment into the East Timorese militia from the camps in West Timor -- it remains unclear as to what methods and degrees of force are being employed by the militia to persuade people to join them.
- In Nenuk, near Atambua, six young men are reported to have been taken out from a refugee camp at gun point on 27 September by militia and have not been seen since.

These reports only serve to highlight the urgent need for protection for East Timorese people displaced to West Timor and other parts of Indonesia, including access by UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies.

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