

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Public Extra-judicial Executions

16 May 1991

INDONESIA:

Five Suspected Rebels

Amnesty International is gravely concerned by recent reports of the public extra-judicial execution of five people by Indonesian soldiers in Aceh, where government forces are attempting to suppress a separatist insurrection. None of the victims had been charged or tried. Amnesty International believes that several hundreds of unarmed civilians have been killed by the security forces in the area in the last 18 months. It also knows of hundreds of suspected rebel supporters who have been imprisoned without charge or trial, many of whom have been tortured or ill-treated while in custody.

Eyewitnesses said that 5 suspected rebels were shot dead in public on 4 May 1991 in the town of Sigli, in the region of Pidie, Aceh. According to reports the killings began at dusk and took place in different parts of the town in full public view. A local official reportedly said that the victims were suspected rebels who had been arrested by the army: *"You have to understand, they were rebels, they were in the wrong."* The names of the victims are not yet known.

A spokesman for the armed forces told media sources on 14 May that he knew of no public executions but said: *"...even they [the rebels] have a right to legal process. If it did happen without due process of law, we will certainly deal with everyone involved very severely indeed."*

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Aceh has had a long tradition of rebellion against central authority, be it Dutch or Indonesian. The Acehnese engaged in a thirty year war with the Dutch colonial army from 1873. In 1945 and from 1953 to 1959, there were revolts against Indonesian rule led by Islamic groups. In December 1976, an Aceh nationalist, Hasan di Tiro, declared independence for Aceh and formed Aceh Merdeka, (also known as the Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front), a small movement to free Aceh from Indonesian rule. A number of suspected Aceh Merdeka members were jailed in the late 1970's and early 1980's. In 1989, the movement began attacks on Indonesian police and armed forces personnel and suspected government informers. While claiming that these attacks were the work of criminal gangs, the Indonesian armed forces have resorted to detention without trial, torture and unlawful killings to combat the rebels. More than 20 suspected Aceh Merdeka supporters, many of them academics and civil servants, have recently been charged with subversion, a crime for which the maximum penalty is death; their trials began in March 1991.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing grave concern at reports of the public execution of five people in the town of Sigli, Pidie, Aceh on 4 May 1991;
- noting that the victims were suspected rebels who had reportedly been arrested by Indonesian soldiers;
- noting that these are only the most recently reported killings and that several hundreds of unarmed civilians and suspected rebels are thought to have been killed in extra-judicial executions by security forces in the past 18 months;
- welcoming the statement of an armed forces spokesman on 14 May that members of the security forces found to be involved in extra-judicial killings will be disciplined;
- urging the authorities to initiate a prompt and impartial inquiry into these and all other unlawful killings, and asking to be kept informed of the results of any such inquiries.

APPEALS TO:

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Governor of Aceh:

Prof. Dr. Ibrahim Hasan MBA
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Telegrams: Governor of Aceh, Banda Aceh, Indonesia

COPIES TO:

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and to diplomatic representatives of Indonesia in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your Section Office, if sending appeals after 27 June 1991.