

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Possible Extrajudicial Executions

5 September 1991

INDONESIA: Melkianus (Mecky) Salosa
Sokrates Yerisitouw

Melkianus Salosa, a political prisoner, is officially reported to have been found dead by Indonesian security forces on 20 August 1991. A leading member of an armed rebel movement opposed to Indonesian rule in Irian Jaya, he had been forcibly returned to Indonesia from Papua New Guinea in July 1990. He was said to have been tortured while in Indonesian military custody and was later sentenced to life imprisonment for subversion. According to official reports, he died of starvation and disease in the jungle about a week after escaping from Waena military prison in Irian Jaya on 4 August 1991. There have been unconfirmed reports that Sokrates Yerisitouw, a political prisoner and a former Police Corporal alleged to have escaped at the same time, but subsequently recaptured, is also dead.

Independent sources have questioned the plausibility and accuracy of the official version of events. They have suggested that the escape may have been deliberately staged by the authorities in order to cover up the execution, or the death in custody, of one or both of the prisoners. While the precise circumstances of the reported deaths remain unclear, Amnesty International is concerned that the two men may have been the victims of extrajudicial execution by Indonesian security forces. It is calling for an immediate investigation into the circumstances of the death of Melkianus Salosa and clarification of the fate of Sokrates Yerisitouw. It urges the Indonesian authorities to take all possible steps to guarantee the safety of other political prisoners held in Irian Jaya.

According to official sources, Melkianus Salosa and Sokrates Yerisitouw escaped from Waena military prison unassisted by sawing through the iron bars of their cell, then scaling a prison wall four to five meters high. Independent sources noted, however, that it is highly unlikely that a political prisoner, alleged to be a leading member of the rebel OPM and apparently in ill-health, could escape from a military prison without assistance from the authorities or prison guards.

On the basis of information provided by Sokrates Yerisitouw, military personnel raided Salosa's hideout in the Abe Gunung area following his alleged escape but found Salosa dead. Military authorities reported that the body was identified by Sokrates Yerisitouw, then buried immediately because it had begun to decompose. They claimed that the family had refused to take the body but this could not be independently confirmed. Questions have been raised about the haste with which the body was buried and the lack of rigour evident in conducting post-mortem investigations. The body was discovered by military authorities. The same authorities announced the estimated time and cause of death. There is no indication that a thorough autopsy was conducted prior to the burial of the body.

The Commander of military Region VIII has denied that Salosa was deliberately killed by Indonesian security forces. The Commander said: "We did not shoot him...He became increasingly ill while hiding in the forest because he did not have enough food and because of the cruelty of nature." He said that Salosa had died of an undisclosed illness and due to starvation on or

about 11 August 1991, seven days after his escape. According to unofficial reports, the corpse said to be that of Melkianus Salosa was little more than a skeleton when it was discovered on 20 August 1991, nine days after he was said to have died. The corpse bore no trace of having been disturbed by wild animals as might have been expected in the jungle. This evidence suggests that Salosa may have died some time earlier, possibly while still in military custody, and not of starvation and exposure in the jungle as the authorities claimed.

Military authorities said that Sokrates Yerisitouw left Melkianus Salosa on 9 August 1991 while he was ill and vomiting. On 16 August 1991, they said he surrendered to the military authorities and informed them of Salosa's whereabouts. After identifying the body on 20 August 1991, Sokrates Yerisitouw was taken back to prison. According to unconfirmed reports he subsequently died, apparently while still in military custody.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Indonesian province of Irian Jaya - also known as West Papua - was a part of the Dutch colony of the Netherlands Indies until de facto authority was transferred to Indonesia in 1963. Opposition to integration with Indonesia, both peaceful and armed, has continued since the establishment of Indonesian control over the territory. The OPM (Organisasi Papua Merdeka - Free Papua Movement) is among the most prominent of the groups advocating independence. OPM members and others believed to have advocated Irian Jaya's independence are at risk of becoming victims of serious human rights violations including political imprisonment, torture, ill-treatment and extrajudicial execution. Suspected opponents of Indonesian rule forcibly returned from Papua New Guinea to Irian Jaya are also at risk. For further information see Indonesia: Continuing Human Rights Violations in Irian Jaya (ASA 21/06/91, April 1991).

Melkianus Salosa, a suspected OPM leader, was deported to Indonesia by the Papua New Guinea Government on 22 July 1990 and placed immediately in military custody. Amnesty International wrote to both the Indonesian and the Papua New Guinea authorities on 31 July 1990 expressing concern for Melkianus Salosa's safety and seeking assurances that he was being humanely treated. The Indonesian government replied with an assurance that he was being humanely treated but the organization later received reports that he had been badly beaten in custody. On 18 March 1991 he was convicted of subversion and sentenced to life imprisonment by the District Court of Jayapura.

Sokrates Yerisitouw, a Police Corporal from Depapre in the District of Jayapura, Irian Jaya, was charged with subversion and sentenced to 13 years in prison for distributing copies of the patriotic song "West Melanesia" to high school pupils in late 1989. He was among at least 130 political prisoners -- 80 of them prisoners of conscience -- from Irian Jaya serving sentences for subversion.

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

- expressing concern at the death of Melkianus Salosa following his reported escape from Waena prison on 4 August 1991;
- urging the authorities to conduct an immediate and impartial investigation into the circumstances of his death;
- asking to be informed of the results of any such inquiry including details

of any post-mortem investigation carried out by the authorities;

- seeking clarification of the whereabouts and fate of Sokrates Yerisitouw who was reported to have died in late August while in military custody;

- urging the Indonesian authorities to take all possible steps to guarantee the safety of other political prisoners held in Irian Jaya.

APPEALS TO:

1.

Armed Forces Commander:

General Try Sutrisno

[Salutation: Dear General]

Commander of the Armed Forces

Markas Besar ABRI

Cilangkap

East Jakarta, Indonesia

**Telegrams: Gen. Sutrisno, Markas Besar Abri
Jakarta, Indonesia**

**Faxes: + 62 21 36 1471 (Armed Forces HQ);
+ 62 21 37 8144 (Army HQ); + 62 21 35 6404 (Army HQ)**

2.

Minister of Justice:

Let. Ismail Saleh

[Salutation: Your Excellency]

Jalan Rasuna Said, Kav 6-7

Kuningan

Jakarta Selatan, Indonesia

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Jakarta, Indonesia

Telexes: 44404 DITJENIM IA

Faxes: + 62 21 32 1625

3.

Military Commander, Military Region VIII which covers

Irian Jaya:

Major General Abinowo

[Salutation: Dear Major General]

Pangdam

KODAM VIII

Jayapura

Irian Jaya, Indonesia

**Telegrams: Maj. Gen. Abinowo, KODAM VIII
Irian Jaya, Indonesia**

COPIES TO:

Attorney General and Minister for Justice

(Papua New Guinea):

Bernard Narokobi

Central Government Offices

Kumul Avenue

Waigani, Papua New Guinea

Faxes: + 675 252512

and diplomatic representatives of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 October 1991.