

AI Index: ASA 21/027/2000 - News Service 125

Embargoed for 0001 GMT 28/06/2000

## **Indonesia: Uphold human rights in Moluccas state of emergency**

While firm measures are necessary to quell sectarian violence in the Moluccas, Indonesia, a state of emergency is not a licence for the security forces to commit further human rights violations, Amnesty International warned today.

"Military and police personnel must know that they are accountable for their actions at all times -- state of emergency or not," the organization said following the Indonesian government's declaration of a state of emergency in the Moluccas on Monday.

Fundamental human rights including the right to life and the right not to be tortured apply in states of emergency or under martial law. The lethal and intentional use of firearms may only be a measure of last resort to protect life.

There are serious allegations of military and police involvement on both sides of the conflict, leading to more violence. Urgent steps are required to ensure that the Indonesian police and army are subject to strict civilian monitoring. Anyone suspected of colluding in acts of violence must be suspended from duty, pending a full investigation into their conduct. Those against whom there is a case must be brought to court and given a fair trial.

Amnesty International is also concerned at recent attempts by the Indonesian authorities to resurrect a discredited National Security Law in apparent response to the conflict. The current version of the law,

although passed by parliament, has not been ratified by the president due to widespread public opposition.

"In its current form, the National Security Law represents a serious threat to human rights. Social unrest in the Moluccas will not be prevented by giving extra powers to the Indonesian army allowing for yet more human rights violations."

Amnesty International also reminded the international community of its human rights obligations in its relations with Indonesia.

"Governments which enthusiastically provide the Indonesian security forces with modern weapons and training have a responsibility to ensure that such transfers are not being used to commit human rights violations in the Moluccas," Amnesty International said.

"The international community must send a clear message to Indonesia that its security forces are in the spotlight. Indonesia's problems will not be solved by turning a blind eye to the conduct of the military and the police."

### **Background**

Communal violence between Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas has escalated over recent months with reports of over 100 people killed in the last week alone. Tension has been enflamed by the arrival of thousands of members of a Muslim group, Laskar Jihad, who have been accused of provoking a number of recent acts of violence. On Monday, the Indonesian government declared a state of civil emergency in the Moluccas in an apparent attempt to restore law and order in the region.

The conflict was reportedly sparked in January 1999 by an argument between a Christian bus driver and a Muslim migrant which

*degenerated into a brawl between rival groups. The incident escalated into a chain of violent attacks waged by both Muslims and Christians. Over 2000 people are believed to have been killed over the last 18 months.*

*Both sides of the conflict have accused the local police and army of taking sides and participating in armed attacks, but these allegations have been difficult to confirm. There are reports that the army plans to replace many of its troops in the main Moluccas island, Ambon, because they may have become involved emotionally in the conflict.*

*\ENDS*

*public document*

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

*For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566*

*Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web :*

*<http://www.amnesty.org>*