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## **East Timor: Death of Resistance Leader highlights need for independent human rights monitoring**

Military claims that East Timorese armed resistance leader, David Alex, died yesterday while in the custody of the Indonesian military again raises the immediate need for independent human rights monitors to have access to the country, Amnesty International said today.

Independent human rights monitors are essential to enable impartial investigations into human rights abuses by both the Indonesian Armed Forces and the East Timorese National Liberation Army, *Falintil*.

“East Timor remains closed to international human rights monitors and journalists at a time of mounting tensions,” Amnesty International said.

“The government claims that abuses have been committed by *Falintil*, but at the moment such claims and reported human rights violations committed by the Indonesian Security forces cannot be independently investigated.”

David Alex, 44, the second-in-command of the East Timorese armed resistance, *Falintil*, had been accused by the military of planning recent attacks on military targets around the Baucau area. Since late May, an increase in attacks by *Falintil* against military and civilian targets has resulted in the deaths of at least 42 people, including civilians, members of the Armed Forces, the police force and *Falintil*.

In a statement made before the United Nations (UN) Decolonization Committee in New York on 17 June, Amnesty International condemned the attacks on civilians by *Falintil* and called on the armed resistance to abide by minimum international humanitarian standards.

In response to the *Falintil* attacks, there has been an increase in troop numbers in East Timor and scores of people have been taken into custody for questioning. Some are already facing charges. It is believed that at least 71 individuals remain in custody in Dili, but it is not known precisely how many people are detained in other areas of the territory.

Amnesty International is concerned that attempts by the Indonesian security forces to determine the identity of those responsible for the attacks and to hold them accountable may result in further human rights violations. Arrests may not be conducted according to international human rights standards and domestic legal procedures and ill-treatment may be used to extract information or confessions.

A lack of transparency also means that it will not be possible to fully and impartially investigate the allegations of human rights abuses by both the security forces and *Falintil*. Resistance sources have admitted to the killing of two civilians -- Miguel Baptismo da Silva and his wife -- in Baucau on 28 May 1997. The Indonesian Government claims that seven people killed in Los Palos on the same day were also killed by *Falintil*. But it is not possible to fully and independently investigate this allegation in the current atmosphere.

The military's claims of the death of David Alex also highlights the need for full and independent investigations. The Armed Forces have not yet provided full information about how David Alex died. East Timor's military Commander, Colonel Slamet Sidabutar, was quoted by *Reuters* as saying that David Alex was shot twice in the leg during a military confrontation and that he died on the night of 25 June as he was receiving treatment at a hospital in Dili. However, another military source quoted by *Agence France Presse* claimed that he died in a helicopter as he was being transported from Baucau to Dili.

Concern about the precise circumstances of David Alex's capture and death has been heightened by news that his body has already been buried by the military in Dili -- less than 24 hours after his death. It is not clear whether an autopsy was conducted. It is believed that his family is currently attempting to negotiate with the military for the return of the body.

Amnesty International is calling on the Indonesian authorities to allow for an independent and impartial investigation into David Alex's death, including an autopsy conducted by independent medical experts, and for the results of such an investigation to be made public.

In April 1997, the UN Commission on Human Rights adopted a resolution on East Timor which expressed concern at continuing reports of human rights violations and urged the Indonesian Government to provide access for UN experts and non-governmental human rights organizations.

"Such access is fundamental to ensure adequate safeguards against further human rights violations and for the truth to emerge about recent incidents," Amnesty International said.

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