

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 21/70/97

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 20 per Section.

UA 291/97

Fear of torture

4 September 1997

INDONESIA Sofyan Abdullah, aged 49

Amnesty International has just been informed that Sofyan Abdullah has been held incommunicado detention since he was arrested at his home on 5 March 1997.

Sofyan Abdullah was arrested by the military in Seupeng Village, Kecamatan Indrajaya, Pidie, in Aceh, Indonesia. It is believed that he was first taken into military custody in Lamlo, in the district of Sakti, Pidie. Since then his whereabouts have remained unknown and his family have been prevented from visiting him.

Amnesty International fears that Sofyan Abdullah may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment while he is being held incommunicado.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Aceh is located at the northern tip of the island of Sumatra. Serious human rights violations including torture, "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions, occurred during the security forces quelling of the armed separatist Free Aceh Movement (*Aceh Merdeka*) from the late 1980s to 1993. Since the beginning of 1997, military reports that *Aceh Merdeka* were again planning attacks gave rise to concerns that there may be a resurgence of grave human rights violations committed by the security forces in the context of military operations. Independent human rights monitoring is restricted in Aceh and foreign journalists are believed to be being currently denied access to the area.

In March 1997, dozens of Acehnese were taken into military and police custody in connection with a bank robbery in the town of Lhokseumawe which the military claim was carried out by *Aceh Merdeka*, and stores of weapons and ammunition found in the area. Eighteen people are facing trial, including at least six who are thought to be facing trial under Indonesia's Anti-subversion Law. At least two women are among those to be tried. The trials are expected to begin this month.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/express/airmail letters in Bahasa Indonesia or English or your own language:

- urging the authorities to clarify the whereabouts of Sofyan Abdullah and the precise reasons for his detention;
- urging the authorities to ensure that he is not subjected to any form of torture or ill-treatment;
- urging the authorities to allow him immediate and continued access to his family and to independent legal counsel.

APPEALS TO:

MILITARY COMMANDER REGION I/BUKIT BARISAN (covers North & West Sumatra and Aceh)

Major General Sedaryanto
Pangdam I/Bukit Barisan
Markas Besar KODAM I
Medan

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Sumatra Utara
Indonesia

Telegrams: Pangdam I, Bukit Barisan, Medan, Sumatra, Indonesia
Salutation: Dear Major General

COPIES TO:

COMMANDER OF THE ARMED FORCES (ABRI)
General Feisal Tanjung
Panglima ABRI
Markas Besar ABRI
Jl. Medan Merdeka Barat No 13
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and to diplomatic representatives of Indonesia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 October 1997.