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## **Indonesia: Releases welcome but many more still in jail**

Amnesty International today welcomed the announcement by the Indonesian Government of further prisoner amnesties and clemency for 28 prisoners of conscience and political prisoners.

The worldwide human rights organization called on the government to follow this positive step by immediately and unconditionally releasing all remaining prisoners of conscience in Indonesia and East Timor, including members of the People's Democratic Party (PRD) and its affiliated organizations.

"The releases are another positive sign of reform and acknowledgement of past injustices in Indonesia," Amnesty International said. "But the government should demonstrate that the release program is not arbitrary."

"There are still dozens of prisoners of conscience and political prisoners in custody in Indonesia and East Timor. The government should launch a comprehensive prisoner release program based on objective criteria and respect for human rights, and grant automatic access for all political prisoners to an independent mechanism to review convictions."

"The release program must also be accompanied by the swift repeal of the legislation which has been used to imprison peaceful government critics," the organization said. "This would prevent further abuses and help build confidence in the government's stated commitment to justice and reform."

### **BACKGROUND**

Prisoners included in this latest round of releases are three elderly men jailed for their alleged links to the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). The three were all suffering serious health problems and had been in jail for over 30 years. However, 10 other elderly men jailed for alleged links with the PKI remain in custody. Most of them have also been in jail for over 30 years and are suffering serious ill-health.

Another prisoner released is Agustiana bin Suryana who was serving an eight-year prison sentence in West Java following his conviction under the Anti-subversion Law in relation to disturbances in the town of Tasikmalaya in December 1996. A community activist, Agustiana was believed to have been arrested on the basis of his peaceful activities.

Ten East Timorese -- not all of whom were in custody -- are also to be released or have charges against them dropped. Three prisoners from Irian Jaya are to be released and nine prisoners -- including one woman -- jailed in connection with alleged separatist activities in Aceh, are covered in the amnesty. .../ENDS