

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 21/98/99

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 15 per section.

EXTRA 111/99

Fear for safety / Possible "disappearance"

18 August

INDONESIA Zainuddin Bunthok, aged 34

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Zainuddin Bunthok, who has not been seen since he was arrested by security forces on 4 August 1999 in the province of Aceh, northern Sumatra. Many people arbitrarily detained by the security forces have "disappeared", or been tortured, ill-treated or unlawfully killed.

Zainuddin Bunthok, 34, a meat seller from Meunasah Blang Village, Muara Dua Sub-district, North Aceh, was arrested by the PPRM (*Petugas Penindak Rusuh Massa*), a riot-control police unit, at a market in the North Aceh town of Lhokseumawe. The security forces have apparently alleged that he encouraged other traders to take part in a general strike in Aceh on 4 and 5 August.

It is not clear where Zainuddin Bunthok is being detained although he is believed to be being held by the security forces in Lhokseumawe.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since late 1998, serious human rights violations in Aceh have increased in the course of TNI counter-insurgency operations against the armed opposition group, *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM), Free Aceh Movement. Dozens of people have been arrested in recent months on suspicion of links to GAM. Suspects detained by the Indonesian National Army (TNI) and the PPRM are often denied access to lawyers of their choice, and are at risk of torture or ill-treatment. Many of those taken into custody have "disappeared" or been unlawfully killed by the security forces.

Since late 1998 the security forces in Aceh have unlawfully killed large numbers of people. On 23 July, at least 45 people and possibly as many as 70 were killed by the TNI during counter-insurgency operations in Beutong Sub-district, West Aceh. The TNI claimed that those killed were members of GAM, but eyewitnesses and human rights groups deny this and claim that the people who died were unarmed and that they were executed by the TNI.

Human rights workers claim that at least four civilians were killed when the PPRM attacked a camp site in Bintang Kala village, Nisam Sub-district, North Aceh, on 7 August. The PPRM, who were reportedly searching the area for GAM members, came across a camp of civilians who were in the area searching for wood and suspected that they were members of GAM. Three others reportedly taken into PPRM custody were later released, apparently bearing marks of ill-treatment.

GAM have also been accused of committing human rights abuses.

On 30 July 1999, President Habibie announced that he had established an Independent Investigation Commission on Violence in Aceh (*Komisi Independen Pengusutan Tindak Kekerasan di Aceh*). The Commission is expected to conduct investigations into human rights violations that have occurred since August 1998, and to submit a report within six months, including recommendations on legal measures, rehabilitation and reconciliation. The commission is apparently made up of 27 people, including members of Indonesia's National Commission

on Human Rights (Komnas HAM), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academics and government representatives.

However, the commission has not been given a mandate to investigate human rights violations which occurred during TNI counter-insurgency operations between 1989 and 1998. Amnesty International believes that the commission can only be effective if it is given unrestricted access to all areas of Aceh to conduct full and independent investigations into all human rights violations including those since 1989, if its findings are made public, and if its report leads to the prosecution of those found responsible.

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

- urging the authorities to immediately establish and make public the whereabouts of Zainuddin Bunthok and to provide guarantees for his safety;
- urging the authorities to ensure that, if he is found to be in custody, he has regular access to human rights lawyers, his family and to medical professionals, and that he is immediately released if he is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Defence and Security
Gen. Wiranto
Menteri Pertahanan dan Keamanan
Jl. Medan Merdeka Barat No.13-14
Jakarta 10110
Indonesia
Faxes:+ 62 21 381 4535/ 384 5178
Salutation:Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

President
President Jusuf Habibie
Presiden RI
Istana Negara
Jalan Veteran
Jakarta Pusat
Indonesia
Faxes:+ 62 21 3904541/526 8726

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 15 September 1999.