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## INTERNAL

### **INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES**

Indonesia - 0400 hrs GMT 28 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 215 FOR INFORMATION ABOUT PANEL AT PRESS CONFERENCE LAUNCH

France - 12 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

Algeria - 25 October - PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE. SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

APEC - 3 November -SEE NEWS SERVICE 212/94

### **TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES**

Turkey - 14 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 181/94

Iraq - 29 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 212/94

**News Service 224/94**

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28 SEPTEMBER 1994**

**INDONESIA AND EAST TIMOR: POWER AND IMPUNITY**

**OPENING STATEMENT  
PIERRE SANÉ, SECRETARY GENERAL  
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

**BANGKOK, 28 SEPTEMBER 1994**

**(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)**

Exactly one week ago, four young men were detained by military intelligence officers in Jakarta. Over two days and nights, they were grilled about their political beliefs and activities; they were beaten, kicked and given electric shocks by their interrogators.

Holding a pistol to the head of one of the men, a military officer said: "This gun is loaded. I have the right to kill you."

What provoked this assault? The four men had released balloons with pro-democracy slogans like "Uphold the Rights of Workers" and "The Constitution Guarantees Freedom of Assembly".

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These four men are not alone. Arbitrary arrest and torture of suspected government critics has been routine in Indonesia and East Timor for years. But as Geoffrey found during his trip last week, there has in recent months been a dramatic escalation in this kind of official harassment and intimidation.

In the last five weeks alone, the authorities have broken up or prevented seminars, cultural events, and professional meetings throughout the country, invoking an obscure law that requires police permission for meetings of more than five people.

The banning of Indonesia's three leading news magazines in June has deepened the climate of fear among journalists.

A draft Presidential Decree now in its final stages of official approval will prevent NGOs from any involvement in politics and allow strict government control of their activities and finances.

And in the run up to November's APEC meeting, the government has flooded Jakarta with 15,000 military and police officers to clear the streets of political and criminal "undesirables" in what they call "Operation Cleansing".

Some Indonesia watchers consider these recent developments to be a momentary set-back in a general trend towards increased "political openness".

But claims of greater political openness and a new found commitment to human rights have never amounted to much for those outside Indonesia's small political elite.

For most ordinary Indonesians and East Timorese, the repressive power of Indonesia's military and executive have remained intact throughout. What has changed in recent months is that the small middle class has found that its own freedom is under threat.

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The major international campaign we are launching today focuses on the last five years -- and shows how hollow the government's human rights pledges have been.

In that time, human rights violations have continued unabated, even in parts of the country portrayed as stable and harmonious.

The police and military torturers and killers have continued to get away with their crimes.

And the government's human rights activities seem to be designed mainly to improve its image in international circles.

This, of course, is not the first time that the government's actions have not lived up to its words.

In March 1966, only months after the military coup which brought the current government to power, General (now President) Suharto promised that his "New Order" would "restore the rule of law" and would be free from "any form of oppression or exploitation".

Yet even as he spoke, Indonesian military forces were taking part in a grim campaign against the Communist Party, leaving more than half a million dead, and a similar number imprisoned without charge or trial.

Now, they target those who organize trade unions, oppose land developments, or test the limits of political freedom by criticizing the government or its policies.

The tensions and targets may have changed, but the premium placed on maintaining national security at all costs has not.

The government tries to brush off these violations as isolated incidents or the work of a few poorly disciplined soldiers, when in fact they are the by-product of a network of institutions, procedures and policies which the government uses to crush perceived threats to stability and order.

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What's scandalous is that foreign governments have let the Indonesian authorities get away with it for so long, apparently seeing the country only as an economic prize and strategic lynch pin.

In the aftermath of the Santa Cruz massacre in 1991, a handful of governments suspended certain kinds of aid and military transfers.

But their efforts were short-lived and most have since returned to their previous habit of paying lip service to human rights while taking few concrete measures to back up their words.

Some governments have continued to supply military equipment which could be used to commit human rights violations. Others have turned away Indonesian and East Timorese asylum-seekers, and may do so again.

Foreign governments will have to stop putting economics ahead of human rights, if we are to see the fundamental policy changes necessary to restore human rights to the people of Indonesia and East Timor.

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There is now a real opportunity for the international community -- and that must include ASEAN governments -- to act in a way that will make a difference.

**Despite the government's insistence that outside scrutiny of human rights matters is unwarranted, past experience shows that scrutiny, fair criticism and concrete measures can make a difference.**

**The Indonesian government's increasingly active role in a human rights fora brings with it a special responsibility to accede to and abide by international human rights instruments. This is something that other governments should urge Indonesia to do.**

**The APEC summit which I mentioned earlier will provide an important opportunity for member governments to show that they are serious about pressing for human rights change, not only in Indonesia and East Timor, but throughout the Asia-Pacific region.**

**But there is now more than an opportunity to act. There is a pressing need.**

**Unless the Indonesian government is held to account in deed -- and not just in words -- there is a danger that it will continue to take advantage of its high profile within the UN, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and within ASEAN, to re-shape the human rights agenda in a way which threatens the fundamental principle of universality.**

**These are the points I will be raising when I visit the governments of Japan, New Zealand and Australia over the next two weeks.**

**To the Indonesian government, we are making more than 20 concrete recommendations on ways to improve the human rights situation. A few of the key ones are:**

- to permit independent human rights monitors to conduct thorough investigations into all violations, and ensure that the suspected perpetrators are brought to justice quickly in a civilian court**
- to prevent torture and ill-treatment by giving detainees regular access to lawyers, and ensuring that statements extracted under torture are not allowed in court**
- to release all prisoners of conscience, repeal the notorious Anti-Subversion Law and all other legislation that can be used to jail people for their peaceful activities or beliefs**
- to permit regular and unhindered human rights monitoring by domestic and international NGOs, including Amnesty International.**

**Systematic human rights abuse has continued in Indonesia for nearly 30 years, and in East Timor for almost 20. We owe it to the people of Indonesia and East Timor, to make our voices heard, and to insist that our governments listen.**

**ENDS\**