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INDONESIA: INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST ACT NOW TO STOP FURTHER
ARRESTS OF PEACEFUL ACTIVISTS

GENEVA -- At a time when Indonesia's human rights record is being discussed at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) in Geneva, the Indonesian Government is still intent on silencing opposition in the country, Amnesty International said today.

"Recent arrests of activists and the upholding of the sentences against three independent journalists and an office worker are a timely reminder that the UNCHR should act on human rights violations in Indonesia and East Timor," Amnesty International said.

"The UNCHR should urge the Indonesian Government to repeal legislation allowing for the imprisonment of peaceful political activists and to release all prisoners of conscience currently detained."

In the past two weeks alone at least five students were arrested, the appeals of four people who were jailed for involvement in publishing independent magazines were rejected and there were demands for a severe prison sentence for an opposition politician.

"The message to peaceful critics of the government is clear: remain silent or face arrest and imprisonment," Amnesty International said. "If governments in Geneva do not vote for a resolution on Indonesia then they are merely reinforcing this message to the Indonesian people."

"The UNCHR cannot turn a blind eye to the exact type of violations it is meant to prevent especially at a time when it is in session."

On 10 April, at least three and possibly five student activists were arrested as they demonstrated outside the trial of opposition politician, Sri Bintang Pamungkas. Prosecution lawyers have recently demanded a four-year sentence for Sri Bintang who is standing trial for allegedly insulting the president during a speech made to students in Germany in April 1995.

On 27 March, the Indonesian Supreme Court upheld prison sentences imposed in 1995 on three journalists and an office worker for their involvement in publishing independent magazines. The prisoners were only informed that their appeal had been rejected by telephone -- they are still awaiting written notification from the court.

Three of the men, Ahmad Taufik, Eko Maryadi and Danang Kakuh Wardoyo, were found guilty of “insulting the government” after articles appeared in an unlicensed publication of the *Alliance of Independent Journalists* (AJI). The articles criticised powers of the Indonesian Minister of Information to revoke publishing licences and also discussed the issue of President Suharto’s succession. The fourth man, Tri Agus Susanto, was found guilty of “insulting the head of state” for an article which appeared in the independent magazine *Kabar Dari Pijar* (*News From Pijar*).

A day earlier, two people involved in a new election monitoring watchdog, the Independent Election Monitoring Committee (KIPP), were arrested. Bambang Ekalaya and Sahzan Sarif were detained by the military for several hours in Lampung, Sumatra, for arranging a meeting without permission from the authorities.

The cases highlight the need for the international community, in particular the UNCHR, to urge the Indonesian Government to stop violating the rights of peaceful critics and activists.

“It is now time for the UNCHR to take a firm stand and adopt a strongly worded resolution on *both* Indonesia and East Timor,” Amnesty International said.

The consensus approach of the international community in previous years has had minimal effect on the human rights situation in Indonesia and East Timor. Recommendations by UN experts have been ignored and still the UNCHR has failed to act decisively.

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