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Indonesia: Human rights are paramount in the relief and reconstruction effort

Human rights norms must not be an afterthought in relief and reconstruction efforts in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami, said Amnesty International today as it released a briefing for the members of the Consultative Group on Indonesia, meeting in Jakarta on 19 and 20 January.

In the briefing, Amnesty International outlines some of the longstanding human rights concerns in Aceh, as well as specific concerns arising from the humanitarian crisis in the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami.

"In the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster, longstanding international human rights principles remain relevant and are not an optional luxury that can only be considered once order has been restored. Human rights are all the more essential in times of crisis," said Amnesty International.

Amnesty International urges the donor community to work with the Government of Indonesia to ensure:

- full, unimpeded and unhindered access to Aceh is guaranteed for humanitarian workers and human rights defenders;
- treatment of those displaced is in full compliance with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and other international standards, which guarantee protection to displaced people;
- protection and empowerment of women and vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly and persons with disabilities;
- close cooperation and coordination with local non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society in the development, implementation and evaluation of protection and assistance programs;
- adherence to the rule of law; and
- no impunity for human rights abuses.

Background Information

Amnesty International's recommendations draw on the body of human rights standards and principles which the international community has agreed should form the basis for effective responses in situations of disaster and emergency. These principles take into account the magnitude of the challenge facing governments in the wake of natural disasters, while ensuring that the legitimate goals of public health, order and security are not achieved at the expense of individual human dignity.

For a copy of Amnesty International's briefing to the members of the Consultative Group on Indonesia, please see: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGASA21/002/2004>

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