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TIMOR

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Massacre highlights Timorese plight

East Timor became world news in November when Indonesian troops fired on a funeral procession at the Santa Cruz cemetery, Dili, the territory's capital, killing up to 200 people. The incident tragically highlighted an injustice long ignored by much of the international community.

The massacre followed a period of mounting tension in the former Portuguese colony, illegally occupied by Indonesia since 1975, with reports pointing to an escalating campaign of Indonesian repression in the run-up to a planned delegation of Portuguese parliamentarians in November. The delegation was called off on 24 October after Portuguese concern at Indonesia's attempts to control and manipulate the visit.

This issue of *Timor Link* looks at the varying accounts of the Santa Cruz massacre and the background to it, focusing on its international repercussions.

The Santa Cruz massacre on 12 November came after a memorial mass for Sebastião Gomes, a youth shot dead by troops in an incident at Motael Church on 28 October. As the mourners approached the Santa Cruz cemetery to place flowers on his grave, soldiers appeared and opened fire on the procession. Among those killed was New Zealander Kamal Bamadhaj.

The tragedy has caused international outrage, the more so as it was witnessed by several foreign visitors who have been able to publicise their testimonies. Below we contrast their eye-witness accounts with the official claims of the Indonesian military.

Foreign accounts

US journalists Allan Nairn of the *New Yorker* magazine and Amy Goodman of the *New*



Pro-independence demonstrators at the Santa Cruz cemetery, shortly before the massacre

York radio station WBAI were in East Timor to report on alleged human rights abuses, and were badly beaten by troops while the shooting was going on.

According to Nairn: 'It was... a planned and systematic massacre.... This was not a situation where you had some hothead who ran amok....' As the people saw the troops, he said, 'they tried to shrink back. There was a small collective gasp in the crowd. As the soldiers turned the corner they raised their M16s and began all at once firing into the crowd....'

'Amy and I went out and stood between the soldiers and the crowd because if they saw foreigners there with cameras with tape recorders they wouldn't shoot. That didn't work.'

Amy Goodman added: 'There was absolutely no warning.... I couldn't believe they would fire on this crowd — kids who were five years old.... These were truly defenceless people. They had nothing but some banners... and the commemorative cloth that they had for this young man, Sebastião, and they just kept shooting.'

'With us they beat us into a corner and, sitting on the ground, the only thing we could say was "Please, we're from America."... I kept thinking that the guns pointed on us... were also from America because the United States provides weapons for the Indonesian army.'

'I turned around — tremendous amount of gun fire — and there were dozens of people lying in the streets.'

Bob Muntz, South East Asia project officer with Australia's Community Aid Abroad, was also present and managed to escape. On return to Melbourne he told a press conference: 'It was a case of sustained automatic weapon fire from many, many guns for a full two minutes into a crowded street that had almost a thousand people in it with no possibility of cover...'

'For all the time I was at the rally... I observed an orderly crowd of people enthusiastically chanting their slogans, displaying their banners, but doing nothing that could be described as provocative towards the Indonesians...'

'There was no doubt that the attack was premeditated, unprovoked and well planned.... I can say categorically that the claims of the Indonesian forces are nothing but lies designed to cover up the most appalling atrocity that has been perpetrated on the people of Timor for many years.'

British cameraman Max Stahl, of Yorkshire Television, whose film revealed the truth of the massacre, wrote a graphic account of the event in the *Independent on Sunday* on 17 November. Like the other eye-witnesses, he emphasised the peaceful nature of the march and the brutality of the military's assault: '...there was no riot. There

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was a procession, a demonstration of exceptionally good order, even good humour, despite the fear of the participants. All the provocation the military needed was in the pro-independence banners and slogans of the demonstrators, and in their temerity in demonstrating at all.

Arrested and detained by the police after burying his film in the graveyard, Stahl was held for nine hours. 'Why, I asked had they carried out this barbarous killing. Why did they need guns at all when the demonstrators had none?'

Indonesia's claims

Head of the Indonesian armed forces, General Try Sutrisno, initially put the death toll at about 50 with 20 wounded and denied that any foreigners were among the victims.

Blaming separatists for the army shooting, the general claimed that 'hand grenades, guns and knives' had been seized and that the crowd which left Motael church had been 'yelling hysterically, pelting shops and a police post.'

'The security forces,' he went on, 'tried but failed to impose order through sympathetic and persuasive means.... The mass was so brutal that it led to victims. The deputy commander of military sector 700, Major Gerhan Lantara, was stabbed and the situation became more chaotic. Preventative actions were first taken... until finally the situation had to be restored...'

Try accused the Catholic Church of instigating the protest, adding that the church, as a place of sanctity, 'should not be misused to create disorder.'

According to Reuters, Major General Sintong Panjaitan, the regional commander, told the Indonesian media: 'The authorities will never be in any doubt about taking tough action against any kind of abuse of our persuasive approach. The only order is: to kill or to be killed.'

On 14 November official Indonesian army figures for the death toll were revised downwards to 19 dead and 91 injured.

General Try, while regretting the incident, said that 'it must be realised that they [fighters against Indonesian rule] are brutal.' He said an investigation would be held, but stated that the affair was a domestic concern. 'We hope that foreign countries will not meddle in the internal affairs of Indonesia because this involves the sovereignty of Indonesia.'

Also announcing an investigation, the foreign minister, Ali Alatas, said that those responsible for the shooting would be punished 'according to the law'. 'This [the shooting] is not something which the government has ordered or condoned.'

Brigadier Rudolf Warouw, the East Timor military commander, explained the shooting as 'a misunderstanding by the soldiers' who shot 'because of the tension'. He admitted his men were at fault and said the dead had been buried immediately in unmarked graves in a deserted cemetery on the outskirts of Dili. He also confirmed that Kamal Bamadhaj was among the dead.

Despite expressions of regret, however, General Try was also quoted in the Jakarta daily *Jayakarta* of 14 November as saying, at a meeting of Lemhanas (National Defence

Institute) graduates, that 'these despicable people [pro-independence demonstrators] must be shot'.

On 9 December, as an official Indonesian commission of inquiry began its investigation of the events of 12 November, Try was equally candid: 'Once the investigation is accomplished, we will wipe out all separatist elements who have tainted the government's dignity.'

Official inquiry

As *Timor Link* went to press, Indonesia released its preliminary report on the massacre. It contradicted army claims that only 19 people had died, upping the figure to 50 dead and 90 disappeared.

Referring to 'soldiers without any command control' and 'exercising self-defence', the report describes the 'provocative savagery' of the demonstrators whom, it alleges, were forced to attend the demonstration. It disowns the accounts of atrocities committed after the massacre.

Western governments appear to have generally welcomed the inquiry's findings. The US State Department said that the commission 'appears to have taken a serious and responsible approach', while the Australian foreign minister, Gareth Evans, agreed with its estimates of the death toll.

But Amnesty International has expressed serious doubts about the credibility of the report and called for an independent United Nations inquiry.

Chronology of events

21 October: Bishop Belo, Apostolic Administrator of Dili diocese, speaks on Portuguese radio of his fears for the safety of the Timorese as the date for the Portuguese parliamentary delegation to East Timor approaches.

25 October: Portuguese delegation 'suspended' after Indonesia vetoes an Australian journalist, Jill Jolliffe, chosen by the parliamentarians as a member of the foreign press team. Reports of rising tension in Dili.

28 October: Motael church incident in which a youth, Sebastião Gomes is shot dead. Alfonso Henrique, an informer of the Intel secret police, is stabbed to death.

Tension continues to rise in early November as repression continues.

12 November: Massacre at the Santa Cruz Cemetery, Dili, where over 100 mourners of Sebastião Gomes are shot dead by the Indonesian military.

In the following days and weeks, governments around the world demand an explanation from Indonesia. Embarrassed foreign minister Alatas flounders, as the Indonesian army attempts to justify its actions.

16 November: Reports of a second massacre in Bemós, East Timor, of up to 80 witnesses of the Santa Cruz massacre.

19 November: 70 people arrested in the Indonesian capital Jakarta during a peaceful demonstration against the Santa Cruz killings. Three weeks later 21 were still detained incommunicado; Amnesty International expresses concern for their safety.

23-25 November: Reports from East Timor tell of an atmosphere of terror worse than at any time since the 1975 Indonesian invasion. Bishop Belo pleads for help. Virtually all phone links with the outside world are cut off.

The military mocks the threat of US pressure, pointing to Washington's failure to follow up expressions of concern at the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in China with concrete action. It claims the massacre will soon be forgotten and threatens to kill all East Timorese youth.

Widespread threats against the Catholic Church throughout Indonesia. The Vatican maintains a cautious silence, worried at the position of the church in a predominantly Muslim country.

27 November: Reports received from East Timor that Indonesia is killing people every day. Hope expressed that 'if the United States tells the Indonesians to stop, the rest of the world will follow'.

9 December: Arrests continue with the church under massive Indonesian pressure. Church contacts say international pressure has nevertheless helped and that US pressure, in particular, has reduced the number of killings that week.

19 December: The Indonesian Bishops Conference calls for clemency for Timorese demonstrators under arrest and facing the death penalty on charges of subversion in connection with the Dili demonstration.

27 December: Official Indonesian inquiry makes public its findings.

The repression led Bishop Carlos Belo, the Apostolic Administrator, and East Timorese resistance leader Xanana Gusmao to call for an international peace-keeping force to be installed during and after the visit. Their appeal for foreign support led 64 bishops from around the world to send a letter to the United Nations secretary-general, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, on 24 October (see 'Foreign bishops', p.7).

Fears for the safety of the Timorese people were certainly a factor in the decision of the Portuguese delegation to suspend its visit.

Background

In 1983 the UN General Assembly requested the secretary-general to secure a settlement of the East Timor issue and since then Portugal had been negotiating with the Jakarta government for access to the country. Negotiations over the Portuguese parliamentary delegation, sponsored by the UN, began three years ago and proved problematic, given the differing interests of the various parties concerned.

As the first official Portuguese visit since Portugal's hasty withdrawal from the territory 16 years ago, the delegation had been seen by the East Timorese as an important landmark in their struggle for independence and as a step towards a solution of the prolonged dispute by the international community.

Jakarta, on the other hand, confident that repression and the economic interests of its major Western trading partners would allow the status quo in Indonesia's '27th province' to be maintained, saw the visit as a means of gaining international recognition for Indonesian control. With this aim in mind, in March 1988 the Jakarta government invited a Portuguese delegation to visit Indonesia and East Timor.

But it was not until July 1989 that a decision to send a delegation was finally made and over two years of negotiations on the terms and protocol of the visit followed. Between July and September 1991 Indonesian and Portuguese government representatives met in New York under the auspices of the UN secretary-general and on 18 September the dates of 27 September and 28 October were fixed respectively as a provisional timetable for the departure of an advance UN advance mission and the parliamentary delegation.

According to an annex to UN Document 4/45/4560 on East Timor of 13 September 1991, the stated purpose of the visit was to facilitate 'the achievement of a comprehensive and internationally acceptable settlement of the question of East Timor'.

Suspension

Lisbon's official reason for the suspension of the delegation, announced by the chairman of the Portuguese parliament ten days before the parliamentarians and their entourage of UN officials and media guests were due to depart for Dili, was that it could not accept Indonesia's decision to veto one of the foreign journalists chosen by the Portuguese delegation to accompany its

mission. Indonesia claimed that Lisbon-based Australian journalist Jill Jolliffe was a pro-independence activist and that her articles would be biased.

But according to a joint protocol agreed by Portugal and Indonesia under UN auspices on the terms of the delegation's visit, neither party was at liberty to influence the composition of media contingents.

In the following days it became clear the Indonesian government was seeking to manipulate logistical arrangements in an effort to control the delegation's freedom of movement, thus threatening its ability to investigate and the independence of its findings. Foreign television teams, for example, would have to transmit their footage via Jakarta and Indonesia had also insisted that the delegation should arrive in East Timor in an Indonesian airways aeroplane, instead of the Thai aircraft preferred by the Portuguese.

Reactions

Given East Timor's long-enforced isolation, news of the suspension was slow in reaching the people and it came via the Indonesian media. Indonesian foreign minister, Ali Alatas, denied that the veto on Jill Jolliffe was an Indonesian attempt to 'complicate the visit' and expressed doubt as to the good will of the Portuguese parliament towards the people of Lisbon's former colony.

Media evidence fuels international reaction

With teams of foreign journalists present in East Timor for the Portuguese parliamentary delegation, it has been impossible for the international community to ignore the Santa Cruz massacre. It was Yorkshire Television footage, shown widely on prime-time television in Europe and the United States, which provided the world with the horrific evidence, casting major doubt on the Indonesian version of events. This article gives a round-up of the international reactions to the massacre.

Portugal

Noting that 'Not even the presence of the Special Rapporteur on Torture of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights acted as a deterrent,' the Portuguese government issued a strongly-worded statement on 12 November which condemned 'this new act of utmost brutality... against a defenceless civilian crowd...'

Describing the massacre as a result of Indonesia's 'continuing illegal occupation [of East Timor], in disregard of the UN Charter and of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions,' the statement called on all states to pressure the Jakarta government to withdraw immediately from the territory and end repression; to demand

Views of the suspension varied both in East Timor and abroad. For the Timorese, unable to obtain balanced reporting of the reasons for the suspension, Portugal's insistence that the visit should not go ahead while the veto on Jill Jolliffe remained was seen as a shattering betrayal. This was also the view of some East Timor watchers further afield. Others, however, including some Portuguese government officials, felt that the parliamentary visit should be completely shelved and energies re-channelled into a new Portuguese diplomatic offensive through the UN.

In an interview with the Portuguese newspaper *O Publico* of 7 November, armed resistance leader Xanana Gusmao announced his movement's intention to continue the fight against Indonesian occupation, despite being 'stunned' by the news of the delegation's suspension. 'We increasingly get the feeling that the solution should be found only by ourselves.'

Student activists in Baucau echoed these sentiments in a Yorkshire Television interview in November: 'If the delegation doesn't come, we will continue to fight. We are prepared to die for a just cause. We'll fight on, but people like you and your [British] government will have to help us because we have neither the power nor the weapons of the Indonesians'.

The consequences of the delegation's suspension have indeed been explosive.

an internationally-supervised investigation and access to the territory for humanitarian non-governmental organisations; and to monitor human rights developments so as to prevent further bloodshed.

It added that Amnesty International had warned the international community in August of continuing human rights violations in East Timor, including allegations of at least 30 extra-judicial killings by the Indonesian security forces in 1990 and early 1991.

The statement also stressed the special responsibility of the United Nations in achieving a solution in East Timor. Before the massacre President Mario Soares had sent a five-page letter to Javier Perez de Cuellar, the UN secretary-general. The UN, he wrote, 'which took such a clear position on Kuwait, should condemn with the same vehemence the occupation and oppression to which Indonesia has subjected the people of East Timor.'

Spokesperson for the National Council of East Timorese Resistance, Jose Ramos Horta, in Lisbon at the time of the events in the Santa Cruz cemetery, said that Timorese had been refused access to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Peter Koojimans, in Dili at the time of the massacre.

Following Indonesia's nomination of a commission of inquiry entirely composed of former army officers and government-

linked figures, Portugal issued a second statement on 20 November. Noting that the commission was chaired by a Supreme Court Judge who was a reservist army general, it declared that the commission lacked any legitimacy and demanded an independent international investigation.

Portugal declared 20 November a day of national mourning for the massacre victims. Flags were flown half-mast, newspapers were published with a black edge and church commemorations were held.

European Community

In a resolution condemning the killings on 21 November, the European Parliament demanded an 'immediate, thorough, impartial and internationally supervised investigation' to bring those responsible to trial. Urging the EC and the UN to impose an arms embargo on Indonesia, it called on the Council of Ministers to review co-operation agreements with Indonesia and on ministers of EC member states to make strong representations to the Indonesian authorities. It also resolved to send a mission to a hearing on East Timor of the European Parliament's subcommittee on human rights, due to be held in Lisbon.

In a statement issued on 25 November, the Council of Ministers expressed 'grave concern' at events in Dili and urged the Indonesian government to 'ensure that members of the Indonesian armed forces and police in East Timor refrain immediately from using violence' and that those responsible for the massacre be brought to trial.

In another statement on 3 December, the Council of Ministers declared that co-operation between the EC and Indonesia would be reviewed in the light of Jakarta's response to the Community's demands for a credible, independent investigation and for human rights to be respected. The statement reiterated the ministers' 'condemnation of these unjustifiable actions by the armed forces of Indonesia'.

On 13 November **Denmark** joined **Canada** in suspending aid to Indonesia and became the first EC member state to do so. Meanwhile, the Dutch government announced that the **Netherlands** would halt new aid to Indonesia, but existing projects would not be affected. Dutch aid to Indonesia in 1990 was more than US\$200 million.

Britain

The Indonesian ambassador was summoned to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to be told of the British government's 'concern' at events in Dili. Otherwise the government did little to convince observers that Britain would take action against Indonesia, despite pressure from all the major parties in parliament.

On 18 November the Overseas Development minister, Lynda Chalker, told the House of Commons that the 'good governance' criterion for the allocation of British aid applied to Indonesia. But, ignoring the assertion of fellow Conservative, Jim Lester MP, that 'what has happened in East Timor is the very opposite of good governance', Hon Mark Lennox-



James Gibbons, brother of killed New Zealander Kamal Bamadhaj, at a protest in London

Boyd MP, the Foreign Office minister, insisted that the British government would only consider its position in the light of the Indonesian government's inquiry. The minister sought to divert attention from the British government's lack of action by referring to EC statements.

On 25 November Lord Caithness told the House of Lords that the government had 'no plans to raise [the] issue with the UN secretary-general'.

Two early day motions have been tabled in the House of Commons. One, tabled by Labour members of parliament Alice Mahon and Dawn Primarolo, calls for a British arms embargo on Indonesia and for the UN Security Council to discuss East Timor. The other, tabled by Conservative MP Hugh Dykes and which has received cross-party support, requests the Indonesian authorities to 'introduce a plan for East Timor's self-determination'.

The massacre was given wide coverage in the British media, with strong editorials appearing in *The Times*, the *Guardian*, the *Independent on Sunday*, the *Observer*, *New Statesman and Society* and the *Catholic Herald*. On Channel Four News, news presenter Jon Snow conducted a 20-minute feature on the massacre and its background, interviewing the Indonesian and Portuguese foreign ministers.

On 10 December, Human Rights Day, during a demonstration held outside the Indonesian embassy in London, a letter from non-governmental organisations calling for an independent international inquiry under UN auspices was delivered to embassy staff by Ann Clwyd MP, shadow minister for overseas development of the opposition Labour Party, Alice Mahon MP, and James Gibbons, brother of New Zealander Kamal Bamadhaj, killed in the massacre. It was accompanied by lists of the MPs who had signed the early day motions in the House of Commons.

United States

The Bush administration, while regretting events in East Timor, has defended its military aid programme to the Suharto regime, worth US\$2.3 million in 1991-92.

'We think that a continued and well focused military assistance programme for Indonesia can contribute to the professionalisation of the Indonesian military.... These kinds of programmes expose the trainee to democratic ideas and humanitarian standards,' claimed State Department spokesman Richard Boucher immediately after the massacre.

In Congress, Democrat senator Claiborne Pell, chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee, and Republican Malcolm Wallop sponsored a resolution calling for a reassessment of all military training aid to Indonesia. 'It is time for our policy of implicitly accepting Indonesia's incorporation of East Timor to be reviewed.... The East Timorese deserve the right to decide their future under the aegis of a United Nations-sponsored referendum,' Pell said.

Calling for an international solution to the conflict in East Timor and an independent inquiry into the massacre, the resolution requested the US ambassador in Jakarta to visit East Timor to conduct an investigation, as well as a report from the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture. It also called for the President to press the UN Commission on Human Rights to appoint a special rapporteur on East Timor and to pressure the Indonesian government to allow the UN Special Rapporteur on Summary and Arbitrary Executions to investigate human rights in both East Timor and Indonesia.

Another resolution was also approved by the House of Representatives.

On 27 November, at the instigation of Senator Wallop, a majority of the Senate sent a letter to President Bush, expressing concern at continuing atrocities in East Timor and stressing the issue of self-determination.

In a 18 December letter to Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Richard Schifter, Democrat representatives Tony Hall and Frank Wolf noted that US aid to Indonesia might be jeopardised by its conduct towards East Timor. (The United States is a major contributor to multilateral aid provided by the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia and worth US\$4.75 billion in 1991.) Expressing alarm at the threat of Indonesian military chiefs to 'wipe out all separatist elements' after the official Indonesian inquiry, they called for international observers to be sent to protect the East Timorese.

The strength of the reaction in the United States was helped by the fact that two US journalists had been present at the Santa Cruz massacre and badly beaten up by Indonesian troops. Their eye-witness accounts (from which we quote on p1-2) were given wide coverage and editorials on East Timor appeared in the *Washington Post*, the *Boston Globe* and the *New York Times*.

In an editorial on 20 November, the *Washington Post* alerted the Bush administration to the strong stance taken by conservatives in the Senate and stated that Indonesia 'should treat the incident not simply as a public relations problem but as

the occasion to pull the thorn of East Timor, to abandon an exercise in Third World colonialism that represents an abiding embarrassment to a country seeking respect and a wider [international] role.'

In a further editorial on 9 December, the *Washington Post*, noting the Senate letter to President Bush, discussed the role that the United States and other members of the international community could play: 'Australia can make a special contribution: suspend its [oil] agreement with Jakarta.... There must be a parallel effort to deal with the political roots of the problem. That means going beyond condemnation and impartial investigation and organising an expression of self-determination. The United Nations could do the job best. If Indonesia is right in claiming it has brought prosperity and light to East Timor, it would not fear a fair poll. President Bush, liberator of Kuwait, should make this his policy's priority.'

Japan

Japan, the largest aid donor to Indonesia (US\$2.1 billion in 1990) and which does not

have an official position on East Timorese self-determination, sent two officials to the territory to investigate massacre.

In a statement on 20 November, the Diet (parliament) forum on East Timor, deploring the massacre and expressing fears for the safety of East Timorese in its wake, urged the government to take a clear stand and to revise its policy towards Indonesia with which Japan has close ties.

Canada

Canada, a major donor of aid and seller of arms to Indonesia, has traditionally trodden cautiously over East Timor. But following the massacre, Minister of External Affairs Barbara McDougall expressed Canadian shock to Indonesian foreign minister, Ali Alatas, at an Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation gathering in Seoul, and announced that Ottawa would review aid to Jakarta.

On 9 December the Canadian government announced the suspension of development aid worth C\$30 million.

Wave of outrage sweeps Australian public

Australia has long since been criticised as an accomplice of Indonesian occupation. But as PAT WALSH writes from Australia, the recent Santa Cruz massacre has had a profound impact on the Australian public, leading to pressure for a change in Canberra's stance.

The response in Australia to the Dili killings has been so strong that the massacre could have happened here, such is the level of public empathy with East Timor. The wave of outrage has equalled that felt over recent incidents in Australia when crazed gunmen have shot down innocent citizens.

The reaction has not just been due to long-standing public concern about East Timor, which successive Australian governments have failed to allay, but to several new factors.

Reopened debate

Since the opening of East Timor in 1989, there has been a steady stream of Australian visitors to the territory, including journalists and church people, as well as a group of Australian parliamentarians which produced a critical report just weeks before the massacre. All have reported on the heavy military presence and continued East Timorese aspirations for self-determination.

Sr Helen Lombard, for instance, the Provincial of the Good Samaritan Order, who made her first visit in October 1991, concluded that East Timor was 'an occupied country'.

Concern that a crisis was developing in East Timor was further heightened by the last-minute cancellation of the Portuguese

delegation due in November.

The massacre, witnessed by several foreigners, including Australians, had two immediate effects. It confirmed what many had been saying about the situation but had had difficulty sustaining; and it mobilised others who had reserved judgement but were now compelled by irrefutable evidence — strongly reported by the Australian media — to take a position.

As a result, the event has crystallised the whole Timor tragedy, reopening a debate which has waxed and waned in Australia over the last 16 years. It has provided a focus of support for East Timor unlike any period since the Indonesian invasion in 1975.

Church reaction

The strength of the reaction has been best illustrated by the response of the Australian Catholic Church. Officially non-committal over East Timor for many years and constrained by Vatican policies, the Australian bishops have finally bitten the bullet. In a series of statements, they have condemned the massacre, called for a UN enquiry and, most significantly, urged a UN referendum in East Timor on independence.

Many Australian bishops, including Cardinal Clancy, declared 7 December a day of national mourning and held masses which were attended by thousands of Catholics. In Canberra, the capital, Archbishop Carroll clearly broke ranks with the government by celebrating mass outside the Indonesian embassy where East Timorese, local activists and unions have maintained a non-stop vigil since the massacre and established an East Timorese embassy. At the cathedral in Melbourne, the

Vicar-General condemned Australia's 'appeasement' of Indonesia and called for self-determination.

Sideways move

Much of the public's anger has been directed at the Australian government. In a book on foreign policy in the 1990s, published shortly before the massacre, the Australian Foreign Minister, Senator Gareth Evans, made only two or three brief references to East Timor and said that Australia's relationship with Indonesia was now so solid that only a strong storm could shake it. But the storm of public opinion has put Canberra in a dilemma.

Electorally shaky and populist, the Labour government has responded to public pressure by condemning the massacre. In mid-December Senator Evans was due to visit Jakarta, the Indonesian capital, to convey Australian disapproval to President Suharto. On the other hand, to protect its relationship with Indonesia, the government has sought to explain the massacre as a local military 'aberration' that cannot be attributed to Jakarta and to pin its hopes on the Indonesian inquiry. It has also refused to back up its condemnation with sanctions, despite widespread calls for at least military co-operation with Indonesia to be suspended.

Canberra has also refused to review its recognition of Indonesia's incorporation of East Timor. However, it has been forced to concede that East Timor, as Prime Minister Bob Hawke put it, is 'a running sore'. To heal this ulcer, the government is proposing new efforts at reconciliation between Indonesia and East Timor, including the resistance, and wants the international community and the UN secretary-general to play a part.

This is a welcome shift in government thinking. But it is also clear that Australia wants the issue to be resolved internally so that Indonesia's 'sovereignty' is not challenged and the UN does not become too involved. The government fears that formal UN involvement might be used against Australia in the International Court of Justice where Portugal is contesting the legal status of the 1989 Timor Gap Treaty between Australia and Indonesia for the joint development of oil and gas reserves in the Timor Sea. [As *Timor Link* went to press, the Australian government and Indonesia approved 11 oil production contracts.]

Thus, despite the strength of public support for justice in East Timor, Australia is merely making a slight move sideways while leaving the essence of its policy on East Timor intact. This is regrettable. It fails to take into account the strength of Timorese nationalism and will be read as weakness by the dominant hardliners in Indonesia. Most importantly it fails to take advantage of the excellent opportunity for a fundamental review of policy and will weaken support for a concerted international initiative which is essential if a lasting settlement is to be found.

Pat Walsh is director of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid's human rights programme

Church under pressure

The Catholic Church in East Timor has played a key role in publicising human rights abuses and offering protection to the occupied territory's population. In recent months it has faced increasing threats and the pressure from the Indonesian authorities has continued since the Santa Cruz massacre.

The Church has often given young people shelter in its buildings when they have feared for their lives and several youths were staying in Motael Church on 28 October when Indonesian troops shot Sebastião Gomes dead in the early hours of the morning. It was this incident which sparked the events leading to the Santa Cruz massacre almost a fortnight later.

In protest at Gomes' murder, the Apostolic Administrator, Bishop Carlos Belo, refused an invitation to attend a meeting of the Indonesian Bishops' Conference in Jakarta. And, in spite of pressure from the military, he issued a statement to clarify the Motael Church incident, rejecting reports in the Indonesian media which blamed the Church.

Belo's statement pointed to the late-night presence during the previous week of unknown 'individuals on motor-cycles' in the vicinity of the church. Normally, 'only police, military and intelligence agents' kept watch.

Belo also stated that he had given his permission for the parish priest's residence and the church to be searched after 6am. Anti-Indonesian pamphlets, Fretilin and Portuguese flags and a number of knives, sticks and iron bars had been found — but in the house of domestic staff, and 'not in the church, as had been tendentiously broadcast'. Eighteen people had been handed over to the police.

In an interview with the head of public relations of the Indonesian Bishops' Conference, Fr Alberto Ricardo, the parish priest of Motael Church and vicar general of Dili diocese, said that it would be impermissible to turn away young people seeking the protection of the Church. 'It is my duty to help those of my sheep who have gone astray and are in difficulty.' He also denied that the church had been used for political ends and that flags and weapons had been found there.

Following the massacre on 12 November, Bishop Belo gave refuge to 257 young East Timorese and personally accompanied others back to their homes. He had counted 89 young men with bullet or stab wounds in the local military hospital and referred to the stabbing of an army officer during the clashes. This, he believed, could have sparked the soldiers' fury.

Since the Motael incident on 28 October, Belo has been without the use of a telephone and cut off from the rest of the world. 'It is not a coincidence. Every time there is a special event here, my phone does not work.' He had written to the governor of East Timor, Mario Carrascalao, saying that the Motael incident was the result of

provocation by the authorities and that one of the two victims was a known collaborator of the Indonesian security agency. He had not received any letter from the Vatican or from the Apostolic Nunciature in Jakarta.

Since the massacre church sources in East Timor have spoken of an atmosphere of terror worse than at any time since the 1975 invasion. Witnesses of the massacre and the injured who had been too afraid to seek medical treatment were being rounded up. Extra-judicial executions, torture and rape were still occurring on a daily basis and leaders of the Catholic Church, including Bishop Belo, were being threatened. Fr Ricardo has been brutally interrogated on a number of occasions. Reports in mid-December pointed to continual surveillance of the clergy and told of priests being interrogated for up to seven hours without interruption.

Bishop Belo has appealed to the United States to intervene as the Indonesian campaign of 'refined psychological harassment' continues. Repression is aimed at turning one Timorese against another and the speaking of Portuguese is treated as a crime against the state. Despite the intimidation, Belo has vowed to 'suffer in joy' with his people in the search for a peaceful solution to the country's problems.

Foreign bishops rally to Timor church

The atmosphere of fear and intimidation in East Timor had been rising long before the Santa Cruz massacre. In October Bishop Belo spoke on Portuguese radio of his fears for the Timorese people during the forthcoming visit of the Portuguese parliamentarians, saying that the military had threatened to shoot the people if they approached the visitors.

Reports were also received of attacks on Catholic churches, with casualties in Maliana, Suai, and Fatumaca. In response, 64 Catholic and Protestant bishops from around the world wrote to the UN secretary-general, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, requesting him to take steps to guarantee the safety of the Timorese people during and after the Portuguese delegation's visit and to install a UN team of observers to monitor human rights after its departure.

In the wake of the Santa Cruz massacre, bishops' conferences around the world reacted to give support to the beleaguered church in East Timor.

Indonesia

Significantly, the Indonesian Catholic Bishops' Conference issued a statement, jointly signed by chairman Archbishop Julius Darmaatmadja of Semarang and secretary Capuchin Bishop Martinus Dogma Situmorang of Padang. Stressing that 'the Church is not a political organisation that

Defender of the people

Appointed Apostolic Administrator of Dili diocese eight years ago at the age of 35, Bishop Belo has repeatedly denounced Indonesian human rights violations and spoken out against Jakarta's attempts to destroy East Timorese language and culture.

Portugal is regarded by the United Nations as the administering authority of East Timor, and the Vatican, which has not recognised Indonesia's annexation of the territory, runs Dili diocese from Rome.

Bishop Belo works in difficult circumstances. He is caught between the demands of his people for independence and church protection and the pressure from sectors within the Church to 'keep out of politics' and accept the incorporation of the Timorese church into Indonesian structures. Belo faces the daily reality of a repressive military occupation, as well as the threat to his personal safety that this involves.

can determine the political activities of its members', it 'deeply regretted the incident', urged all parties to settle the matter 'through judicial process' and to be 'calm and wise and not to be influenced by rumours which could worsen the situation.'

Subsequently, a fact-finding team sent by the Indonesian bishops to East Timor blamed the Indonesian military for the massacre, establishing that over 100 people had been killed instead of the official Indonesian figure of 19.

In a follow-up statement, the mission expressed solidarity with the Timorese Church and their 'deep regret that because of the actions of some members of the armed forces, the moral integrity, dignity, and credibility of the nation has been put at risk in the eyes of the world, of our own country, and even more so, of the people of East Timor, a people to whom we should be reaching out'. This was the first time that the Indonesian bishops had taken such a clear stance on East Timor.

Japan

In a letter of support to Bishop Belo on 12 December, the Japanese Catholic Bishops' Conference called for the right of the Timorese people to self-determination, expressing 'our strong support for your demand for a referendum as presented by your Excellency to the secretary-general of the United Nations in February 1989.

'We urge the United Nations to carry out a thorough investigation of this incident and do its best to find a total solution to the East Timor problem.

'Japan occupied East Timor for three years and a half during the Second World War and destroyed its beautiful Cathedral. We remember this crime committed by our nation and sincerely repent of this action. Because of this sad history we feel a very strong solidarity with you.'

England, Wales and Ireland

The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales issued a statement expressing sorrow and outrage at the deaths in Dili, extending solidarity to Bishop Belo. It called on the 'international community, and especially the United Nations, Portugal and Indonesia to seek urgently a just and lasting solution to the status of East Timor based on the free choice of the Timorese people'.

In Ireland, a statement by Bishop Eamonn Casey, chairman of Irish Catholic aid agency, Trócaire, condemned Indonesian policies as 'close to genocidal' and called on the Irish government to make representations in the UN and the European Community for the massacre and human rights abuses to be investigated by an international commission.

The Vatican

On 10 December Pope John Paul II sent Archbishop Giovanni De Andrea, a high ranking Vatican diplomat, to East Timor in order to assist the local church and to 'listen and encourage'. This was the first time the Timorese Church had received the consolation and encouragement of a visiting Vatican diplomat.

A life of constant fear

Catholic aid worker CLARE DIXON returned to the UK from Dili on the morning of the Santa Cruz massacre. She had visited East Timor in response to appeals for foreign observers to be present in the run-up to the visit of the Portuguese delegation. She describes the atmosphere in Dili.

Timorese live in constant fear of night and day raids on their homes, and of torture if they are suspected of pro-independence sympathies. The remotest villages have been scoured for potential political opponents and execution promised to anyone who might try to speak to members of the Portuguese delegation.

When I arrived in East Timor the atmosphere was highly-charged. It is impossible for a European to blend into the crowd in East Timor — foreigners are rare and even now there are many children who have never seen white skin before.

Heavy presence

Everywhere I went I was aware of being watched or followed. After my first night at

a small family-run boarding house on the outskirts of Dili I decided it was better to leave for a 'safer' hotel in the centre of town. Apparently, police and agents of Intel had kept overnight watch and sent spies into the hostel to find out who I was. On my second day the local police commander turned up to find out where I was from and what I was doing there. I felt my hosts would be safer if I left.

Numerous visits to military dictatorships in Latin America had made me think that I was used to living in situations of tension. East Timor brought a new dimension altogether. No one knows just how heavy the military presence is in East Timor but Bishop Belo estimates it between 45,000 and 50,000 troops. In addition the bishop says that 'half the population is paid to spy on the other half'.

If we take his figures then there are proportionately ten times as many troops in East Timor per head of population as in El Salvador. In El Salvador there is a civil war whilst in East Timor the Indonesians claim that in the last two years they have reduced the armed resistance from 200 to just 50 men, and that the Timorese are perfectly happy to be part of Indonesia.

Viewed with suspicion

Communication was difficult. Although East Timor was a Portuguese colony for four centuries, the Indonesians have banned the teaching of Portuguese in schools. Only one school, run by the church, has the temerity to offer this subject and has been starved of finance as a result. Any foreigner who speaks Portuguese is suspected by the Indonesians of pro-independence sympathies and so I was warned repeatedly only to speak the language to people linked to the church whom I could trust. All traces of Portuguese have been erased -- the only display of the language I saw was the memorial of the diocese of Dili's golden jubilee.

The church itself is viewed with open suspicion by the Indonesians. It is the last visible vestige of East Timor's heritage and since 1975 the Catholic population has swollen from around 40 to almost 90 per cent of Timorese. Days before my arrival on the island troops had stormed the parish church of Motael.

Wherever I travelled I was subject to questioning by the military and the police -- just a sampler of what people in Timor experience every day. On a visit to a provincial town, I received a message from the community of sisters with whom I was to spend the night. They begged me not to go to their convent or try to make contact with them as they were too frightened of reprisals from the military if they were seen to be talking to a foreigner. The priests there told me that they had received warnings that 'their graves were ready' if they tried to make contact with the Portuguese delegation.

'Hard to be Christian'

On the same day I watched as four frightened 15 year olds were hauled from their church-run school for interrogation by the police. Their crime? They had refused

to sing the Indonesian national anthem at the school's weekly flag-raising ceremony and so their Indonesian teachers, after physically assaulting them, called in the police.

'It is so hard to be a Christian here' said one Timorese priest. 'we know that we have to love our enemies, but how do we reconcile that with the hatred and bitterness we have endured over these years?'

Bishop Belo knows the church lives with danger. As we sat on the verandah of his house, he pointed out the intelligence agents posted constantly at the entrance to his garden. Although by nature and experience he is a cautious man, there was no hesitation in his response to my question as to what he considered the most important sign of support that the church outside East Timor could make: 'You must work to get the troops withdrawn'. Not an easy proposition in the face of indifference on a massive scale from the international community.

There is a touching faith among all those Timorese I met that their plight must stir the world's conscience and that they will some day be able to live in freedom, peace and independence. They are a gentle and peaceful people, the kind that, according to the Bible, will inherit the earth. Their greatest fear is that, after the routine expressions of moral outrage at the massacre, governments throughout the world will once more conveniently forget the same principles which compelled them, earlier in 1991, to go to war to prove that large and powerful nations cannot expect to invade, annex and subjugate small weak nations and get away with it.

The above is an edited extract of Clare Dixon's article, 'Cry of a forgotten land', published in the Catholic Herald of 22 November 1991

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