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Indonesia's retreat from East Timor

The announcement by the Indonesian government that it is prepared to pull out of East Timor came like a thunderbolt, although close observers had seen signs that change might be in the air. The economic meltdown and the worsening political crisis have forced Jakarta to re-assess its East Timor policy. While independence now seems closer, a backlash by pro-integration para-military forces is spreading death and terror in East Timor which means that it's too early yet to celebrate.

The announcement came on 27 January, following a cabinet meeting. Information minister Yunus Yosfiah, accompanied by foreign minister Ali Alatas, announced that a meeting of the politics and security ministers chaired by the president, B.J. Habibie, had decided that if the East Timorese people were not prepared to accept Indonesia's offer of wide-ranging autonomy, the government would ask the meeting of the People's Consultative Assembly, the MPR, later this year to 'let East Timor go'.

People in East Timor received the news with cautious optimism and a heavy dose of scepticism as 23 years of hardship and misery have taught them to be suspicious of any good news emanating from Jakarta.

It is ironic that it fell to retired general Yunus Yosfiah to make the announcement. He served for many years as a combat soldier in East Timor, better informed than most about the army's failure to impose Indonesian rule. As military commander, he tried without success for many years to implement a 'hearts and minds' policy. He is also deeply implicated in the murder of five TV journalists in Balibo in October 1975, who were killed by a unit under his command. But as the country's first post-Suharto minister of information it also fell to him to usher in an era of press freedom, thanks to which the Indonesian press gave extensive coverage to the surprise announcement and its implications. East Timor was on all the front pages for days with photos of the East Timorese leader, Xanana Gusmao, receiving distinguished visitors in Cipinang Prison. Photos of Xanana, Bishop Ximenes Belo and even the much maligned José Ramos-Horta have graced the covers of most political magazines and tabloids.

Xanana place under 'house arrest'

At the same time, the government took another important step forward in deciding to move Xanana Gusmao from Cipinang Prison, where he is still serving a 20-year

sentence, to a private house. Since the authorities claim that Indonesian law does not recognise the status of house arrest, his new residence was declared to be an extension of the prison where he would be under 24-hour guard by the security forces.

But after refusing for years to countenance his release on the grounds that he was a 'criminal', it was now made clear that his move from prison had been made in response to persistent international pressure, above all from the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, and to enable him to play an active part in consultations regarding a peaceful solution of the East Timor question. According to Justice Minister Muladi, the move would give him far greater freedom to

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contact people and stay in touch with developments. As the undisputed leader of the Timorese resistance, Xanana will now be able to take a much more direct part in negotiations with Indonesia, with the different strands of opinion in East Timorese society and with the UN and other key international agencies involved in the process.



Xanana in a minivan being moved to his new 'prison'

Speaking at a press conference in Cipinang shortly before the transfer, Xanana welcomed the change in the Indonesian Government's policy, praised President Habibie for his courage and stressed the fact that the Indonesian government had for the first time ever recognised Timor's right to self determination .

Xanana's transfer from prison was a major international news event. Within hours of his move, Xanana was receiving a stream of visitors to discuss ways to take the issue forward and in particular to end the violence in East Timor and seek reconciliation. His new 'prison' is now such a hive of activity that it is as if the East Timorese resistance has opened a de facto office in the heart of enemy territory.

The new policy and the UN

The decision in Jakarta came in the midst of continuing negotiations between Indonesia and Portugal under the auspices of the UN secretary-general. These talks revolve around an Indonesian proposal for wide-ranging autonomy hedged by the condition that once this is accepted, the international community will accept East Timor's integration into Indonesia. This has been countered by Portugal and the CNRT who insist that, if accepted, autonomy must be a transitional stage, leading ultimately to a referendum.

The 27 January announcement fudged the question of how the East Timorese will be assessed as having accepted or rejected autonomy and Alatas continues to insist that there can be no referendum. It has been suggested by some people in the government that the matter could be resolved at the forthcoming general elections, that the elected representatives from East Timor will convey their views to the MPR when it meets in November. If they say no to autonomy, the MPR will let East Timor go.

But this scenario completely overlooks the fact that the decision on East Timor's future rests with the UN, not with Indonesia's MPR. Both Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his special envoy, Jamsheed Marker, have publicly acknowledged that the majority of the people of East Timor favour independence. The question is, to find a mechanism to record this as an indisputable fact.

The response of UN secretary-general Kofi Annan to this conundrum was to call an immediate meeting of the two countries' foreign ministers, to seek clarifications from Jakarta about how it intended to proceed. A proposal from Portugal for a UN-supervised consultation of East Timorese opinion to be held by August this year was flatly rejected by Alatas. By declaring that this consultation was a referendum 'in all but name', the Portuguese foreign minister appears to have stiffened Alatas' rejection, and the foreign ministers departed from New York with the matter unresolved. Diplomatic sources now believe that it will be up to the UN to work out a form of consultation that is valid internationally and acceptable to Jakarta as being not remotely like a referendum. Perhaps when the foreign ministers meet again in March, a solution will be found.

Divisions within the elite

The policy change was not unanimously welcomed, even within the government. The key minister in charge of the issue for more than ten years, Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, could hardly conceal his embarrassment as he faced the press with Yunus Yosfiah on 27 January. It later became clear that he had hardly been consulted about the shift. Another senior minister, retired General Feisal Tanjung, the Coordinating Minister for Security and Political Affairs, was also not pleased with the change. But key ministers including Minister of Defence General Wiranto and economic czar Ginandjar Kartasasmita expressed full support. For Ginandjar, this could pave the way for desperately needed foreign economic assistance, without which the Indonesian economy will never recover. For Wiranto, it meant one problem less for his heavily-stretched forces, facing riots and unrest on an unprecedented scale.

For many years Alatas has described East Timor as 'a pebble in the shoe'. This is of course an understatement because Indonesian embassies around the world have had their work cut out trying to defend the indefensible position of justifying the Indonesian occupation of East Timor. Even before the downfall of Suharto, it was clear that senior diplomats were becoming ever more reluctant to defend the annexation of East Timor against challenges in virtually every international forum.

At the same time, many Indonesian intellectuals started to challenge Indonesian colonialism in East Timor whether on grounds of principle or because of the high cost of the policy in economic as well as diplomatic terms.

Added to all this is the fact that public opinion in Indonesia has become more critical, as the true facts about East Timor have begun to emerge. The birth in the past year of two Indonesian solidarity groups with East Timor has helped popularise the issue. Their books, seminars and exhibitions have helped transform East Timor from being taboo to becoming a matter of great public interest.

Habibie turns the tables

But ultimately, it was Habibie, egged on by his senior political adviser Dewi Fortuna Anwar, who took the plunge. For a president who has proven incapable of re-

solving the mounting problems which he inherited from Suharto, here was one area in which he proved decisive. This decision may be the one that will earn him a place of honour in the history books, alongside people like P.W. Botha who abandoned apartheid.

It was the more liberal wing in ICMI, the Muslim Intellectuals Organisation which Habibie chaired from the outset until he became president, that played the crucial role in the policy switch. For some time Dewi Fortuna, who some see as the country's real foreign minister, has publicly expressed criticism of the annexation of East Timor. She has become exasperated with the repeated challenges she has had to face at international conferences, forcing her to defend a policy she did not support.

Now she makes no secret of her mistrust of ABRI. Referring to the need to disarm para-militaries (see below), she said the job should be borne by the international community. 'With its morale currently at a low ebb, Indonesia's 500,000 strong military cannot be relied on to do the job because it is not regarded as neutral.' [*International Herald Tribune*, 17 February]

But a glance at Habibie's own political career shows that East Timor has played no role in his advance from an aerospace engineer in Germany to the supremo of Indonesia's military-industrial complex, nor indeed in his personal and family fortunes. He freely admits that it was strong international pressure that persuaded him to reverse Jakarta's inflexible position on East Timor. First and foremost, it was the shock decision in January by the Australian government to acknowledge, after having given de jure recognition to Indonesia's annexation, that East Timor did have the right to an act of self-determination, that convinced Habibie that it was time for a change. As he himself made clear, Prime Minister John Howard's letter informing him of the switch was the final straw.

All of Habibie's utterances on the question assume that the East Timorese will reject autonomy, paving the way for Indonesia to leave. He makes no secret of the fact that he sees East Timor as a 'burden' on the Indonesian economy and the quicker Jakarta is rid of it, the better.

And what about ABRI?

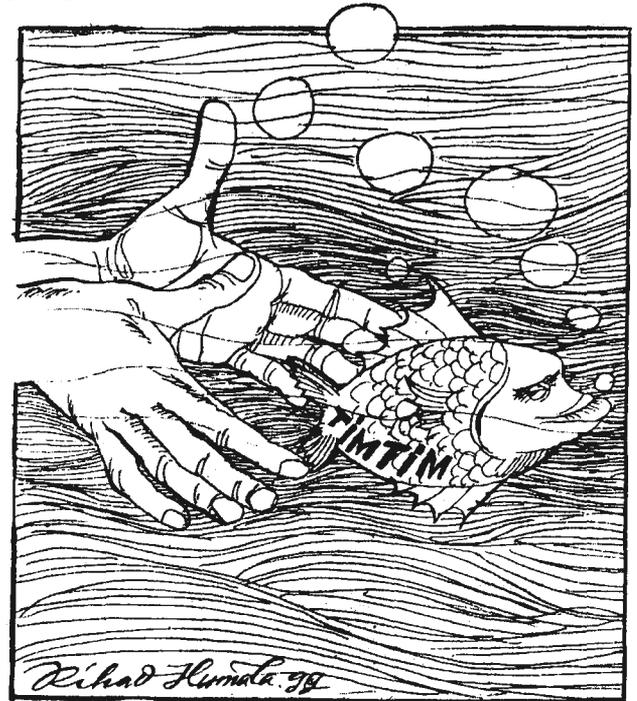
But the Habibie initiative could never have been taken without the backing of the top ABRI generals. It was ABRI that invaded East Timor on Suharto's orders and East Timor has been an ABRI project ever since.

After Wiranto had given his blessing following the first announcement, Major General Syamsul Ma'arif, the armed forces spokesperson, declared on 2 February that ABRI was 'ready to leave East Timor. If the people want ABRI to leave East Timor,' he said, 'it will do so.' He even claimed that ABRI did not have its own agenda in East Timor. Later that day, commander-in-chief General Wiranto said that Indonesian troops would gradually be withdrawn from East Timor, while admitting frankly that the troop deployment had increased in the past few months in order, he claimed, to cope with the rising level of activity by pro-independence groups. It must be said that there is no evidence of this.

With the exception of Johnny Lumintang who is now Deputy Chief of Staff of the army, none of the generals holding key positions in Cilangkap, ABRI head-quarters, has served for any length of time in East Timor. Until recently, the career prospects of army officers have been

largely determined by a tour of combat duty in East Timor but this is no longer true.

However, a number of retired generals have made no secret of their anger with Cilangkap. The most outspoken opinion was voiced by retired Colonel Gatot Purwanto who was chief intelligence officer in East Timor at the time of the Santa Cruz massacre. He bitterly accused Wiranto of being an officer 'who has never seen service in Timor, who has spent too much time carrying other people's briefcases and who knows nothing about the sufferings of the ordinary soldier'.



Indonesia letting East Timor go

It is widely acknowledged that 20,000 soldiers have lost their lives in East Timor. In the first 10 years alone, the army is thought to have lost 15,000 men. Leaving East Timor was seen by many hardliners as a betrayal of these sacrifices. But with its backs to the wall on many fronts, ABRI was hardly in a position to stand out against a policy that accepted the reality of Indonesia's hard-pressed economic and political situation on the world arena.

The domino theory

It has long been argued that Indonesia will never allow East Timor to go independent for fear of the repercussions in other parts of the country like West Papua and Aceh. But it now appears that the present ABRI leadership believes that by disentangling itself from East Timor, it will be in a better position to devote its hard-pressed resources to coping with these other problems. People no longer accept ABRI's dominant role in society, nor are the authorities able to cope with the many social eruptions. The disturbances in Aceh, Ambon and parts of Java have exposed ABRI's weaknesses. The demand for wide-ranging autonomy or federalism is growing in many of the country's far-flung regions.

It may have been the domino theory that persuaded Megawati Sukarnoputri, chair of the PDI-Perjuangan, to come out forcefully against allowing East Timor to go independent. She argued that the present government is a transitional government and has no authority to take such a decision. She has also refuted Habibie's view that East

Timor is a 'burden', a 'drain on the nation's resources'. Speaking to a huge rally of the party faithful on 14 February, she declared that the decision to integrate East Timor into the Republic was irreversible. Since she is a front runner to become Indonesia's next president, her position is a setback for East Timor.

The other key opposition leaders, notably Abdurrachman Wahid who leads the Nahdlatul Ulama and Amien Rais whose party enjoys the backing of the Muhammadiyah and who are both likely to win significant support in the Indonesian elections in June, have come out in support of a referendum in East Timor.

Public support for independence grows

For several years East Timorese resistance leaders have insisted that independence was just a matter of time. José Ramos-Horta even said that it would happen before the millennium. What was once seen as wild optimism now seems to be true.

Following the downfall of Suharto, the student movement in Timor took advantage of the power vacuum in Jakarta and ABRI's setbacks to organise mass rallies in the cities and the countryside. The main demands of their meetings and rallies were a referendum and the sacking of Governor Abilio Osorio Soares, a close political and business associate of the Suharto clique.

It quickly became clear that the vast majority of Timorese were preparing themselves for an independent East Timor and that ABRI was fighting a losing battle. Even though fresh troops have been brought in, morale is at rock-bottom. It is now estimated that the number of troops in East Timor is approaching 21,000. East Timor used to be the place for young officers to gain quick promotion and fat bonuses but those days are gone. The occupying army has been unable to stem the tide of mass mobilisation.

Another change has been the formation of Timorese political parties, though they are officially still banned. The five pre-1975 Timorese political parties have been re-established while the two main parties, Fretilin and UDT have opened offices in Dili, as has the CNRT, the Council of Timorese Resistance, the umbrella for pro-independence groups. There are other political structures as well: GRPRTT, a loose coalition of prominent Timorese who used to work within the Indonesian administration, is one. The most striking of all is the student federation *Dewan Solidaritas Mahasiswa Pemuda dan Pelajar Timor Timur* which has become the rallying point for the majority of the students and has succeeded in bringing out tens of thousands of people on the streets.

Others are Forsarepetil, the organisation of pro-referendum Timorese academics and government employees, the youth organisation Ojetil, the women's organisation OMT, and several radical political parties, PST, APKT and PRD.

Changes also seem to be afoot on the military front. Late last year, Colonel Tono Suratman the present military commander of East Timor told the visiting Canadian ambassador that he was ready to start negotiations with *Falintil*, the armed wing of the resistance. And he actually called it by its proper name, not the 'GPK' the acronym which stands for 'wild disruptor gangs'.

The para-military threat

While most of the talk in Jakarta is about autonomy and independence, the military situation in East Timor presents a very different picture. People in Jakarta like Alatas who oppose a referendum argue that this would inevitably lead to civil war. What is happening on the ground in many parts Timor suggests that well-armed gangs are determined to make this prophesy a reality.



New militia recruits

The policy change in Jakarta threw the *pro-integrasi* groups in Timor into a panic. They felt betrayed by the government in Jakarta. There have always been Timorese who side with the occupiers. The early *pro-integrasi* groups within the UDT and Apodeti were driven into the Indonesian embrace because of their conflict with Fretilin. Over the years the parties have splintered, with some members shocked by the brutalities of the colonising power. Today, most have joined the pro-referendum forces. The latest *pro-integrasi* groups consist mainly of para-military units, which are armed and co-ordinated by local military commands. Their leaders are people who have collaborated with military intelligence run by the notorious *Kopassus* commandos or have served in the Indonesian civil administration.

Indonesian army documents that were leaked abroad [see *TAPOL Bulletin* No 149/150] reveal that 12 para-military units are under the Dili military command, Korem 164. They are locally based and come under the direction of the sub-district military commands.

The twelve teams listed in the documents are:

NAME	Subdistrict	Total
Team Saka	Baucau	304
Team Alfa	Lospalos	115
Team Makikit	Viqueque	168
Team Halilintar	Atabae	121
Team Railakan	Ermera	136
Team Ainaro	Ainaro	92
Team Suai	Suai	22
Team Same	Same	102

Team Sakunar	Aileu	31
Team Morok	Manatuto	34
Team Liquisa	Liquisa	9
TOTAL		1134

[see also TAPOL Occasional Reports No. 26, EAST TIMOR, An Analysis of Indonesian Army Documents, October 1998].

But there are other more informal para-military units which are not listed in the Korem 164 documents, notably the Dili-based Gadapaksi, and the Ainaro-based Mahidin, as well as others which are apparently nameless. These informal groups are particularly vicious and militaristic, as their names suggest. Mahidin stands for *Mati atau Hidup Integrasi dengan Indonesia* which means 'Life or Death for Integration with Indonesia' while Gadapaksi stands for *Garda Penegak Integrasi* or 'Guards to Uphold Integration'. *Gadapaksi* was set up several years ago to strike out against the clandestine movement in Dili. Its godfather was Lt. General Prabowo, Suharto's son-in-law, one of the most notorious *Kopassus* officers. He is now living in exile in Jordan but his network in East Timor still exists, is apparently well funded and enjoys the support of people like Governor Abilio Osorio Soares.

Beachhead against guerrillas

The para-military units under Korem 164 function as a buffer between the *Falintil* guerrillas and the ABRI territorial units. ABRI gives them weapons and uses them on the front line in remote hamlets which are close to guerrilla strongholds. The army's strategy of 'letting Timorese fight Timorese' goes back a long time but some analysts believe that using East Timorese as the beachhead against the guerrillas is a sign of defeat and of the low morale of Indonesian soldiers. According to the military documents, the men killed in combat in Baucau, Viqueque, Atabae and Liquisa were para-militaries.

In the past two months, ABRI has stepped up its recruitment drive for the army and for civilian guards called *Wanra* (*Perlawanan Rakyat*) or People's Resistance and has been busy recruiting West Timorese into the army. In February, ABRI said that a thousand new *Wanra* recruits had been enlisted. Described as being part of a nation-wide programme to provide extra security, they will be spread out across the 13 districts of Timor and are already undergoing military training. They will be inaugurated on 1 May and receive a monthly allowance of Rp 250,000.

Some of the more notorious para-military leaders such as Basilio Araujo of Gadapaksi, Edmundo da Silva of Alfa, Lafaek of Makikit, Cancio Carvalho of Mahidin and Joao Tavares of Halilintar are frequently quoted in the press. Their language is very belligerent and is always laced with threats of a civil war.

Arming the para-military

The para-military threat is not new to East Timor. Before they emerged, there were the *ninjas* or hooded killers, who roamed the towns terrorising the people.

Using Timorese to fight Timorese was the idea behind the formation of two special battalions, 744 and 745 consisting only of Timorese soldiers under Indonesian officers. But many members defected to the jungle with their weapons or showed a reluctance to fight the guerrillas. As a result, Timorese now account for less than half the men

in the two battalions. This is the context in which the occupation forces have now placed their hopes in a new and highly belligerent force.

While it is known that the para-militaries are recruited either by the military commands or by trustworthy Timorese collaborators, on the crucial question of how they obtain their weapons, the situation is less straightforward. Senior officers have contradicted each other. One ABRI spokesperson in Jakarta told the BBC that weapons were given to them 'on loan' and returned after the 'job' has been accomplished, but other generals have denied that they are being armed by ABRI. The para-military leaders openly boast about getting their weapons from the local commands... and keeping them.



As for the *Wanra* units, the Wiranto version is that their task is to assist the regular troops in upholding law and order. As an example, he mentioned Alas [see *TAPOL Bulletin*, No 149/150] where 13 people were held hostage by the guerrillas, five soldiers were killed and their weapons captured. But human rights activists in Dili say that it is beyond doubt that the military and para-military were the ones who caused a bloodbath in the area.

Bishop Belo and Manuel Carrascalao who heads the GRPRTT have strongly criticised the arming of the militias and reject the claim that this is to counter operations by the guerrillas. Following a vicious attack on the village of Galita in January when at least four civilians were shot dead by members of Mahidin and thousands of people fled the area to take refuge at a church in Suai, Bishop Belo said: "In the fifteen years I have been here, I've never heard of Fretilin raiding a village and causing 6,000 to flee. Yet, the moment the *Wanra* are formed, 6,000 people were forced to flee."

It is not easy to assess the number of weapons in circulation among the para-militaries. Members of Mahidin have bragged about 10,000 firearms being handed out across the country but according to Clementino dos Reis Amaral of *Komnas Ham*, the National Human Rights Commission, and Manuel Carrascalao, it is much less than this. From past experience, ABRI might think hard before handing out so many weapons, fearing that they could end up in the hands of the guerrillas. Ten thousand is probably far too high, but there are no doubt enough in circulation to make the situation in East Timor highly explosive.

If Jakarta is really serious about its new policy, Habibie and Wiranto will have respond to demands for the disarming and disbandment of the para-militaries. This is the lit-

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mus test for Jakarta's switch of policy. The international community must also assert its authority by sending independent monitors to East Timor to oversee the dismantling of this dangerous force and safeguard the lives of the people of East Timor.

Xanana's role in a volatile situation

Most Timorese believe that independence is just a matter of time. But they have seen so many developments on the international arena - the outrage after the Santa Cruz massacre, the Nobel Peace Prizes for Bishop Belo and Ramos-Horta, visits from many UN officials - yet things inside East Timor have not changed. In such circumstances, they can be forgiven for losing patience. This was the message conveyed in Xanana Gusmao's lengthy New Year's message - a plea for more patience and for people to keep faith in the face of slow but steady developments.

Quite remarkably, in the weeks following the policy shift in Jakarta, there were no mass rallies in Dili even though many atrocities were being committed by the paras in several parts of the country. This was in response to fears by the resistance leaders that rallies could be used by



Kostrad paratroopers on 7 December 1975 prior to being airlifted into East Timor. The photo is from an article in Air Force Magazine, January 1999. The article: 'Drop Zone Dili' by Hendro Subroto gives a detailed account of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor.

provocateurs to create chaos. On 16 February however, 150,000 people went out onto the streets to mourn peacefully for the death of Benedito de Jesus Pires who was killed by the authorities two days earlier. The march through the capital was carefully supervised by hundreds of stewards from the student movement.

Far away in Jakarta, Xanana now works day and night to bring together all the rival groups. Before he left Cipinang Prison, he had an important meeting with NU leader, Gus Dur who asked for - and received - the assurance that Xanana would do all in his power to safeguard the security of the vast number of Indonesian migrants now living and working in East Timor. Gus Dur was the first top-level opposition leader to visit Xanana; others could soon follow.

Within days of his release into 'house arrest', he had met many East Timorese of various political persuasions including representatives of the CNRT office in Dili, the present governor Abilio Osario Soares, and the former president's special ambassador for East Timor affairs, Lopez da Cruz. Just before he left Cipinang Prison, he met the former governor, Mario Carrascalao and they agreed to set up a Commission of Reconciliation, headed by Mario. There is talk of this Commission convening its first meeting in Jakarta, which would be attended by Xanana.

On 4 March, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will visit Jakarta and is bound to meet Xanana. On 10 March, the Indonesian and Portuguese foreign ministers will meet again in New York to thrash out a mutually-acceptable way of consulting the East Timorese on autonomy or independence. As the speed of developments gathers pace, there are real hopes that the 23-year long struggle of the courageous people of East Timor is nearing its fruition.

UK and others pledge peace-keepers

The British Government will send troops and financial assistance for a UN peace-keeping force in Timor after Indonesia's withdrawal. The decision was conveyed to Xanana Gusmao in a letter from Minister of State Derek Fatchett. Similar pledges have been made by Nordic countries, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

Welcoming the British pledge, Jose Ramos-Horta praised Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and International Development Secretary Clare Short who were 'sensitive towards East Timor and very aware that they have to make up for Britain's arms sales to Indonesia'. [*The Independent*, 20 February] In addition to the countries mentioned here, the Irish Government has also pledged support.

A senior official of the International Red Cross who visited Timor said the agency would try to calm the situation down and be ready to act fast in the case of a humanitarian disaster because of the fear and anxiety in the territory. The agency is seeking permission from the armed forces commander to enlarge its mission in Timor. [*AFP*, 19 February]

Attention should also be given to various UN agencies sending teams to Timor to help alleviate problems by replacing Indonesian personnel such as doctors. A UN official is shortly to take up a special post in Jakarta, with unlimited access to Timor. *

Women's conference breaks new ground

A conference on 'Timorese Women and International Law' convened by the International Platform of Jurists for East Timor, IPJET, was held in Lisbon in January. It provided a forum for the discussion of a variety of issues confronting Timorese women caused by the horrors of the Indonesian invasion as well as by discrimination against women within East Timorese society. The presence of women coming direct from East Timor greatly enriched the discussions.

The conference brought together East Timorese women in the diaspora active with the resistance, outstanding human rights activists working for years in solidarity with East Timor, two East Timorese women who came from Dili and an East Timorese student in Yogyakarta, along with lawyers and academics from Indonesia, Portugal and elsewhere. With such a mixed composition, there were lively discussions on a number of controversial issues, as well as a sense of frustration at the inability of international legal instruments to deal effectively with the crimes against humanity experienced on a daily basis by Timorese women during the 23 years their country has been under Indonesian occupation.

Intolerable sufferings exposed

The most memorable moments occurred during the session addressed by two Timorese women, themselves the victims of Indonesian atrocities. **Fatima Guterres** spent several years in the bush as the secretary of *Falintil*, the armed resistance. She became the commander of the women's brigade and described the horrors inflicted on the population by the encirclement and annihilation campaign launched in 1977 by the Indonesian army with the support of US aircraft when tens of thousands of Timorese were forced to flee, many carrying ill and dying children. After her husband died in her arms, she was captured gravely weakened and hungry. Thereafter, she was tortured and raped under interrogation. Later, when she was being transported by helicopter, she saw another woman being raped and thrown out of the aircraft.

Fatima said that these painful memories had strengthened her resolve to resist the Indonesian invaders. After living for several in Dili, she left the country and now lives in Portugal.

The other speaker was **Armandina Gusmao Santos**, the sister of Xanana Gusmao, who lives in Dili. She spoke of the horrors of the day of the invasion on 7 December 1975 when Indonesian soldiers parachuted into Dili and scores of men and women were shot dead at the wharf. Unable to control her emotions as she spoke, she described the constant humiliations which women in occupied East Timor experience at the hands of the Indonesian soldiers.

The session was chaired by Jim Dunn, former Australian diplomat who has written extensively on East Timor. He was the first person to conduct interviews with Timorese refugees in Portugal about the appalling atrocities perpetrated in Dili on the day of the invasion. In response to the appalling experiences of the two speakers, he strongly condemned the international community for its failure to support East Timor in the early years of the oc-

cupation and for its continuing failure to force Indonesia's rulers and members of the security forces to be held responsible under international law for their crimes against the people of East Timor. He spoke of the need for a major international tribunal on crimes against humanity and war crimes in East Timor.

Organising in defence of women's rights

The other woman from Dili to address the conference was **Maria Domingas Fernandes Alves**, popularly known as Micato. She now heads a women's rights organisation in Dili, *Forkopas*, the Communications Forum for the Women of Loro Sae.

She was only fifteen at the time of the invasion. She saw her father being arrested and later went into the hills to join up with the resistance, where she concentrated her efforts on working in the women's organisation, the OPMT, but was captured in 1978. After a month of intense interrogation, she was released. In 1981, after her husband was arrested, she began to get interested in women's issues and became an avid reader of women's literature.

Forkopas has a wide range of activities including supporting women political prisoners and the families of political prisoners, running seminars and courses to empower women, providing support to mothers after child-birth and in the care of their children, and counselling women who have been traumatised by experiences with the forces of occupation or because of discrimination within Timorese society. It also provides courses on women's rights and

The EAST TIMOR PROBLEM and the ROLE OF EUROPE

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promotes the principles contained in the UN's Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW. She spoke of the cultural genocide underway in Timor but said that despite the occupiers efforts to win the hearts and minds of the Timorese youth through the education system, they had not succeeded in isolating them from the resistance.

The organisation issues a Bulletin called *Babadok*; it is named after the cylinder-shaped drum which is played only by women.



Micato later told TAPOL that her organisation was set up two years ago and has a staff of fifteen with four departments, for the dissemination of information, for education, for the support of victims and the running of crisis centres and for advocacy regarding gender issues and women's rights in a deeply patriarchal society.

Discrimination against women

Another major contribution came from **Ivete de Oliveira**, a student in Yogyakarta who spoke at length about her research into the position of women in marriage, their subordinate status within their husband's family and the competing position of women whose husbands take several wives. The dowry system frequently resulted in wives being treated as little more than chattels, she said.

She also spoke of widespread domestic violence. Out of 200 respondents in a recent study conducted in East Timor, eighty per cent of the women said they had experienced beating or other forms of violence. Women were reluctant to report their sufferings to their own families, to the church or to the police and had been brought up to consider these sufferings as 'fate'. In many parts of the country, only the boys were sent to school, while women were frequently disregarded when problems of the community were being discussed. Women who had been defiled and raped or forced into marriage by Indonesian soldiers were often ostracised by their own families. All too frequently, it was the victim who was blamed for what had happened to her.

She reported the case of a widowed Timorese woman who had been forced into liaisons with three Indonesian soldiers from whom she had borne three children. She had received no sympathy from the church in her predicament and when she died of cancer in 1997, the church refused her the last rites.

As part of her degree in Yogyakarta, Ivette has written a dissertation on the Timorese women's organisation, OPMT which was set up by Fretilin in 1975. In the course of her investigations, she discovered that the most highly revered OPMT leader was known by her nom de guerre as *Mulher de Tapo*. She fought for several years with Falintil and who, Ivette said, was the first woman to die in the line of

fire. The OPMT's first leader, Rosa Bonaparte, was shot dead in Dili by the invading troops, along with scores of others.

Another speaker, George Aditjondro, an Indonesian academic now lecturing in Australia said that it was regrettable that too little attention was being paid to the history of the OPMT.

Women and the resistance

The most controversial issue during the conference was the role of women in the East Timorese resistance movement. Timorese women living in exile in Portugal, Australia, Canada and the UK were highly critical of the poor representation of women in the governing councils of the resistance organisation, the CNRT, and of the difficulties they had had in getting their views expressed in what was a male-dominated organisation.

The chairperson of Fretilin, Mari Alkatiri, strongly rejected claims that there was an anti-woman bias in his party or in the CNRT, while the women who had come from East Timor seemed to feel uncomfortable with the feminist overtones of the challenges being presented. The experiences of Timorese women in the diaspora have clearly injected a new dimension in the discussion of women's issues in East Timor.

This vigorous discussion and the information imparted about the depth of discrimination within Timorese society means that women's issues will certainly be one of the major questions to be confronted by East Timorese society once it has liberated itself from the shackles of the Indonesian occupation. The conference in Lisbon could prove to be a landmark in preparing both men and women for this mammoth task. *

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bon, there were no fewer than four provocations. Two involved minibus passengers being beaten up by the driver and the other two involved office workers being attacked with machetes by unidentified persons. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this was a show of force, to scare off the observers, making it impossible for them to continue with their mission.

Horizontal and vertical conflicts

In today's complex political climate in Indonesia, both horizontal and vertical conflicts have emerged. This is to be expected after a long period of an authoritarian dictatorship. The political conflict in Aceh, reported elsewhere in this issue, is primarily vertical. Acehnese society is relatively homogeneous and is held together by a deep sense of dissatisfaction with Jakarta, which varies in strength among different sections of society but the object of people's discontent is the same. Under such circumstances, it is difficult for military intelligence or provocateurs to destabilise Acehnese community. The only way to create terror is by sending in professional killers.

The situation in Maluku is more vulnerable and fragile. The community in places like Ambon is very heterogeneous and provocateurs can reap a grim harvest. This kind of horizontal conflict is very damaging and will have a negative impact on efforts to build a healthy civil society there for many years to come.

Placed in the context of the evil intentions emanating from the Suharto clique to destabilise the situation in Indonesia, the prospects for Indonesia in the coming difficult months as the June elections approach are not good. *

Huge death toll in Maluku riots

In January, serious riots flared up in Maluku, a group of islands stretching from the Philippines in the north to Australia in the south. This is the worst outbreak of violence since the fall of Suharto last May. It has caused social upheaval and hundreds of casualties with 50,000 people seeking refuge in mosques, churches and police barracks. Clashes are still continuing, with no end in sight.

Most of the conflict occurred in central Maluku, on one of the main islands, the densely populated Ambon, but also on the smaller islands of Haruku and Sanana. The other main island Seram was also affected. The wave of violence started on 15 January on the island of Dobo in south-east Maluku where eight people were killed in riots.

bourhood of Ambon, and a passenger from Batumerah, a Muslim district. The conflict quickly turned into a full-scale communal conflict; within hours, the city was in flames.

This first wave of rioting lasted for six days and the city took on the appearance of a battle-ground. People evacuated from their homes and entire neighbourhoods went up in smoke. At least one hundred people were killed in less than a week while hundreds more were severely injured. Some three hundred people are reported missing.

A local observer estimated that at least three thousand houses were gutted, while 31 churches and mosques, 5 markets, 4 shopping centres and more than 1,000 shops and kiosks were destroyed. A number of government buildings, hotels, schools and one cinema also went up in flames. Some 130 cars, 100 motor cycles and 430 pedicabs were destroyed.

At least 50,000 people took refuge in public buildings, churches, mosques and police or military barracks. The main Protestant church Maranatha and the main mosque Al Fatah were inundated with thousands of terrified families who had lost all their belongings. An initial estimate of the material damage is 500 billion

rupiah (US\$ 55 million)

For several days the airport of Ambon was closed. Foreigners were evacuated by military planes to Darwin, Australia and Ujung Pandang in Sulawesi. The Governor of Maluku, Saleh Latuconsina, announced a curfew and the military issued a shoot-on-sight order for anyone resisting the authorities. Troops were brought in from many parts of Indonesia, including police units from East Timor. ABRI commander-in-chief General Wiranto flew to Ambon to monitor the situation.

Social disintegration

Observers warn that similar unrest could happen anywhere in Indonesia. The source of the trouble is a highly combustible mix of severe economic problems affecting people everywhere, in the wake of the collapse of a 32-year totalitarian regime, which quelled all fundamental freedoms. Normal political life was prohibited and civil society was utterly destroyed. As a result, democratic traditions



Tens of thousands people had to flee from their houses

The main clashes occurred in Ambon city, the capital of Maluku. They started on 19 January, coinciding with Idul Fitri, the festival that ends the Muslim fasting month.

Maluku has until now been regarded as a region of exemplary ethnic and religious harmony. Just a few weeks earlier, President Habibie had pointed to Maluku as a shining example of harmony. The Maluku archipelago consists of 1,027 islands with a population of 2.08 million. The majority, according to 1997 figures, are Muslims (59.01 per cent) with Protestants accounting for 35.29 per cent and Catholics for 5.19 per cent.

There has been an influx of people from other parts of Indonesia, adding to the ethnic diversity, especially people from the island of Buton and many Buginese traders, mostly of the Muslim faith. The civil administration consists of people from all parts of Indonesia.

War-like situation in Ambon

The initial clash in Ambon started with a quarrel between a minibus driver from Mardika, a Christian neigh-

were eroded, to be replaced by authoritarian patron-client relations.

According to Professor Loekman Soetrisno of the Gadjah Mada University, the key to the country's social problems is chronic poverty and a concentration of hard-line religious sentiment. Unrest often springs from long-held animosities between rival religious and ethnic groups. This, he said, could lead to clashes erupting almost without warning. Loekman listed a number of places in the archipelago which he described as potential flash points.

Wiranto and the opposition

On the fourth day of the riots, General Wiranto arrived in Ambon together with a party of generals but it soon became obvious that the security forces were unable to control the situation and Wiranto flew back to Jakarta without achieving anything, not even meeting the different local religious leaders. All the four-star general could do was hand over Rp500 million to the local government for relief. In desperation, General Wiranto held an emergency meeting with the Ciganjur Four.

The Ciganjur Four, named after the place where Gus Dur, a Muslim leader, lives, consists of the four top political leaders outside the system. Amien Rais, Megawati and Abdurrachman Wahid, or Gus Dur as he is known, represent the main political opposition groups, while the Sultan of Yogyakarta is revered by many people in Central Java.

Wiranto's meeting with the four opposition leaders conveys a number of political messages. It was highly significant that the commander-in-chief felt the need to confer with the opposition about the grave situation in Ambon, revealing the weakness of the Habibie government and the inability of ABRI to restore peace and order in Ambon. It was patently obvious that appeals for calm from Habibie had gone totally unheeded in Maluku.



The two key post-Suharto players, President Habibie and ABRI chief General Wiranto, are still widely seen as Suharto stalwarts, greatly affecting their legitimacy and credibility. Wiranto's high-profile approach to leading non-military leaders was also an effort to cast aside his image as a Suharto protegee. It has to be said however that the meeting with the Ciganjur Four had little effect on events in Maluku.

New waves of violence

After the first wave of riots, the situation in Ambon remained volatile while violent events outside the capital kept the situation on the boil in several islands. A few

thousand Buginese left Ambon by ship and it is unclear whether they will return to Ambon.

On 20 January a nasty incident occurred in the tiny village of Telagakodok and the nearby Benteng Karang hamlet, 30 km north of Ambon city. These two predominantly Christian centres of population were wiped out. The attackers killed twelve people and left seven injured, while more than one thousand inhabitants fled their homes. Most are migrants from south-east Maluku and the island of Flores.

Then in February more violence erupted in Kairatu, a small village on Seram, the island which is seen by many locals as the main island. According to official reports, ten people died.

On 14 February, another violent clash occurred, this time on the island of Haruku which is very close to the island of Ambon. There was a serious clash between the two communities, Muslim and Christian, which resulted in thirteen deaths and forty-three seriously injured. According to press reports, most of the victims died from gunshot wounds which may be because the army and the police were operating their shoot-on-sight command. The trigger for this violence was the torching a day earlier of the house of a Christian family.

Provocateurs

Analysts are puzzled as to why a relatively harmonious society could explode so violently. 135 people have been arrested in Ambon alone and are undergoing intensive questioning. At least half are likely to go on trial. Many were identified as members of the notorious organisation *Pemuda Pancasila (PP)*, which can best be described as the biggest group of 'organised crime', and which enjoys the political protection of the Suharto family. After Suharto's downfall, this group has repeatedly been mentioned as the main provider of provocateurs in the many cases of looting and riots. The *PP* is chaired by a notorious individual, Yorrys Raweyaj, a frequent visitor to the Suharto residence, who has won himself a place in Indonesia's rogues' gallery, symbolising the bleak political climate in post-Suharto Indonesia. Many analysts believe that Cendana (the Suharto residence) finances the disruptive operations of Yorrys and his hirelings but nobody has yet come up with conclusive evidence.

As for the Maluku riots, both General Wiranto and Maluku police chief Colonel Karyono have suggested that they were instigated by provocateurs. It is common knowledge that provocateurs have played a key role in fanning riots in other places like Banyuwangi, Ketapang and Krawang. General Wiranto is said to have been informed about the role of *PP* provocateurs.

According to reports in the Indonesian press, 862 *preman* (political gangsters) arrived in Ambon shortly before the riots, which would suggest that provocation has played a major part in the on-going Maluku tragedy. The activities of the provocateurs appear to follow a pattern which has so far proven to be very effective. They create an incident which could be anything from beating up someone in the street to burning a house in a village. Information is then quickly disseminated to the affected community and hugely inflated on the way so as to have the greatest possible impact.

During a visit to Ambon by two observers from *Komnas Ham*, the National Human Rights Commission, to Am-

continued on page 8

Army shoots scores of people in Aceh

Scores of people were shot dead in a massacre in Aceh on 3 February. This is Indonesia's worst massacre since the Santa Cruz Massacre of November 1991. Scores of people were killed, hundreds were injured and dozens of people are still unaccounted for. Initial investigations by local human rights activists in Aceh put the death toll at well above fifty. All those killed died of gunshot wounds.

Like all massacres perpetrated in Indonesia in the past three and a half decades, the true death toll may never be accurately established as many dead bodies were spirited away by the army for secret disposal or dumped in rivers.

The massacre occurred outside the local military command in the village of Idi Cut, East Aceh in the early hours of Wednesday 3 February 1999. Large crowds of people were returning home at a leisurely pace, some on foot, others on motorcycles or pick-up trucks, from a gathering at the village of Matang Ulim. The event which was attended by five thousand people had proceeded peacefully and without incident. In addition to religious exhortations (*dakwah*), the rally heard speeches about the history of Aceh and about the Free Aceh Movement, known as *Aceh Merdeka*, a movement that the Indonesian army has been trying to quell since the mid 1970s.

Attempts to halt meeting foiled

Three hours before the meeting commenced, troops attacked people who were constructing a stage and preparing the venue for the rally. They destroyed the stage, beating and injuring many people, including a three-year old boy, and told the organisers that the rally should be cancelled because no permit had been granted. However, thousands of people from surrounding villages were on their way already and the rally went ahead as planned.

After the crowd dispersed in the early hours of Wednesday, hundreds of people were pelted with stones by youths as they neared *Koramil*, the military command in Idi Cut, in response to which some people described by witnesses as 'troublemakers' mingling with the crowd started throwing stones. As this was happening, three army trucks drove up and without warning, opened fired from their raised vantage point, killing and wounding a large number of people. According to witnesses, gunfire continued to be heard for several hours, while blood was flowing everywhere. Some of the survivors were driven off to a nearby police station in Langsa. Later that morning, as others who had taken refuge in nearby ditches emerged, they too were arrested. Of the fifty-three people arrested at the time, four men are still being held and may soon be charged.

Soon after the massacre, the area where many people lay dead, dying or wounded was sealed off by the army. Local residents said that they saw army trucks being loaded with bodies. Later, the army forbade local residents from searching for bodies in nearby long grass or clearing the bush surrounding a nearby village.



Soldiers in battle dress patrolling the streets

The day after the massacre, it became known that some of the bodies had been taken to a bridge spanning the River Arakundo 30 kilometres away and thrown into the river. Within hours huge crowds converged on the spot to search for relatives or friends who had not returned home. Altogether seven bodies were pulled out of the river. All the bodies had their hands and feet bound with wire and had sunk to the bottom because they had been weighed down with stones in sacks tied to the bodies.

The fact that thousands of people turned up to attend a rally and listen to speeches about Free Aceh reveals the depth of popular feeling in Aceh and the revulsion against rule from Jakarta which has intensified since the downfall of the dictator Suharto last May. By using lethal force against an unarmed crowd returning home from a peaceful rally, the army was warning the Acehnese people to stop questioning their status as part of the Republic of Indonesia or face the consequences.

Covering up an atrocity

It is clear from the way the bodies were disposed of that the army has gone to great lengths to conceal the scale and the nature of the atrocity, to lie about the number of casualties and to shift the blame for the deaths. The local military command first said that only one person died, which it later increased to three. It alleged that people in the crowd had started firing first, a claim vigorously denied by many survivors and witnesses.

A week later, the army claimed that Russian-made AK-47 bullets which are not part of their arsenal had been used, trying to shift the blame onto members of Aceh Merdeka. However, local residents picked up standard army-duty bullet cartridges bearing the markings of the Indonesian

ammunitions company, Pindad, in the vicinity of the Idi Cut military command the day after the massacre. More Pindad bullets were recovered from wounded survivors and from the bodies found in the river. In defiance of everything already known about the atrocity, the army also alleged that the shooting took place at the site of the rally as the crowds were dispersing.

Army must withdraw, impunity must end

In a statement issued on 15 February, TAPOL said that the human rights situation in Aceh will continue to deteriorate unless the army halts its special operations and withdraws its troops from Aceh, not only the combat troops but also the territorial troops which make up the main force in the province.

In the wake of this latest atrocity, there have been growing calls in Aceh for it to separate from the Republic of Indonesia by means of a referendum, bearing in mind that the Acehnese people have experienced one tragedy after another over the past ten years while members of the armed forces enjoy impunity from prosecution. Moreover, the Acehnese people have stood by powerless as the territory's rich natural resources have been exploited for the benefit of the heavily-centralised Indonesian state and those who control the country's economy, while receiving almost nothing in return.

In response to the deepening sense of frustration in Aceh about its status and the overwhelming role of the

military, the provincial governor, Professor Syamsuddin Mahmud recently suggested that the best way forward is for Aceh and other Indonesian provinces to become part of a federated state. This elicited a sharp rebuke from Indonesia's Minister of Justice, Professor Muladi, asserting that Indonesia is a unitary state.

In its statement TAPOL called on European Union embassies in Jakarta to dispatch a team of diplomats to Aceh to conduct investigations, consult local human rights NGOs and report back to the EU Council of Ministers. It also called for an end to the army's current operation known as *Operasi Wibawa '99*, for all special forces to be withdrawn from Aceh as the first step towards the total demilitarisation of Aceh.

Two men arrested for speaking at rally

Two men who are suspected of having spoken at the mass rally held just before the Idi Cut massacre have been arrested. **Dahlan alias Teungku Panton Labu**, 32, was shot in the leg as he was being arrested. The injury was so serious that his leg had to be amputated. The police claim that he was shot because he attacked the police with a machete. A journalist from the local newspaper, *Serambi* was refused permission to speak to the wounded man. The other man arrested **Raziman alias Teungku Bagok**, 40, told journalists that he had handed himself in to the police because he felt threatened although he would not say from which quarter. He said that, as a villager, he spoke at the meeting because he felt moved by the Free Aceh issue.

[*Serambi*, 18 February]

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Army brutality reigns supreme in Aceh

When General Wiranto announced the lifting of Aceh's military operational status last August, the Acehnese did not expect thorough investigations into the human rights abuses perpetrated by the military over the last ten years. Some may have hoped that their persecutors such as Suharto and Syarwan Hamid would be made accountable. Yet even those whose hopes were tempered by a knowledge of the army's bloodthirsty ambitions in Aceh must be stunned by ABRI's latest barbarity.

The recent excesses should be placed in the context of the army's determination not to relinquish control over Aceh that would result from ending *daerah operasi militer* or DOM. The intensification of military activity can be traced back to within five days of the announcement, when the media began to report renewed incidents of intimidation. People who had revealed the location of mass graves in public were being harassed by unknown individuals. Government officials in Bireun were warned by a group of masked men not to talk to reporters or NGOs. A rape victim was intimidated by members of *Kopassus* for reporting what had happened to her. Two *Kopassus* officers attempted to kidnap the wife of a man who had been abducted and has not been seen since. Mysterious Free Aceh flag-raising incidents began to occur, such as in Puloh Siren village, Peudada subdistrict, North Aceh.

Indeed the military's intentions were seriously tested in the announcement when Wiranto stated that 'although human rights violations took place, the soldiers were only doing their job of annihilating the armed security disturbers,' adding that 'those who remain at large will sooner or later receive their just desserts from God.' On the same

day, senior cabinet minister, retired General Feisal Tanjung told reporters that accusations of human rights abuses in Aceh were 'stories', whereas former 011/Lilawangsa Regional Commander, Colonel Dasiri Muswar, speculated that the mass graves dated back to Dutch times or to the killing of communists in 1965.

Kandang village

Much of the harassment and intimidation in Aceh, as well as alleged *Aceh Merdeka* or Free Aceh (GAM) activities, has focused on Kandang, close to the LNG-rich town of Lhokseumawe, where Mobil Oil Indonesia is based. In our last issue, we reported two alleged GAM incidents – the first in November when an armed convoy flew Free Aceh flags, that ended at Kandang and the second involving a shoot-out between anti-riot police, Brimob, and GAM personnel, including Ahmad Kandang, said to be a GAM leader recently returned from Malaysia. In fact, some families living in Kandang had moved elsewhere, as a number of returnees from Malaysia previously unknown to them began to settle there, apparently carrying out their clandestine activities without hindrance from the security

forces. More than a hundred people were arrested over the two incidents. To date it is estimated that at least 257 families have yet to return to the village.

During the fasting month, a woman had her prayer robe pulled off by a soldier as she was returning from Ramadhan prayers in a village near Kandang. The local villagers, angry with the military's continued harassment, marched to the local command post to demand an explanation. Unsatisfied with the response, others joined from surrounding villages and refused to disperse until military reinforcements eventually forced them to do so. But the crowd, frustrated by the military's attitude, attacked seven government offices in Bayu and Bukit Rata. They then moved on to Kandang, blocking the road between Medan and Lhokseumawe with electricity pylons lying nearby. The crowd started searching for military personnel.

Army sponsored anarchy?

News of clandestine killings of alleged informants, or *cuak* and the presence of 'ninjas' or professional killers, coupled with a marked increase in military activity and an increasingly violent response from the Acehnese, turned Aceh into a province bordering on anarchy. Although it is unclear to what extent the role of the GAM is pivotal to the renewed unrest, the army has used alleged GAM activities to justify its increased use of violence.

In December, three ninjas were found but escaped as part of the sweeping operations in Bayu and the dismembered body of an alleged informant was found in Uteun Kot Cunda village. The following day, a 60-year-old man was attacked in his home in Keudee Krueng village, Kuta Makmur subdistrict and later a frustrated crowd in Sigli, Pidie province attacked the local Golkar office and burnt the motorbike of an alleged informant. Villagers spotted three ninjas in Blang Mangat subdistrict; they gave chase but the men escaped. Later, people in Meurah Muliah subdistrict apprehended a ninja who was caught trying to break into the Luang Angen religious school. The man who would not reveal his name was carrying sharp weapons. The crowd took him to the local police station where he was interrogated briefly, but was later spirited away by angry crowd, according to the police. Later in December, there were more ninja sightings in Mane Kareung village, Blang Mangat subdistrict, in an incident where an 18-year old man was followed on his moped and eventually pushed off by two unknown individuals. On the same day, a crowd burnt down a bank in Beureunuen, 12 Km east of Sigli, and the following day an armed informer was found dead in the village of Matang Sijuek Barat, North Aceh. Local people said the man used to be GAM, but became a double agent.

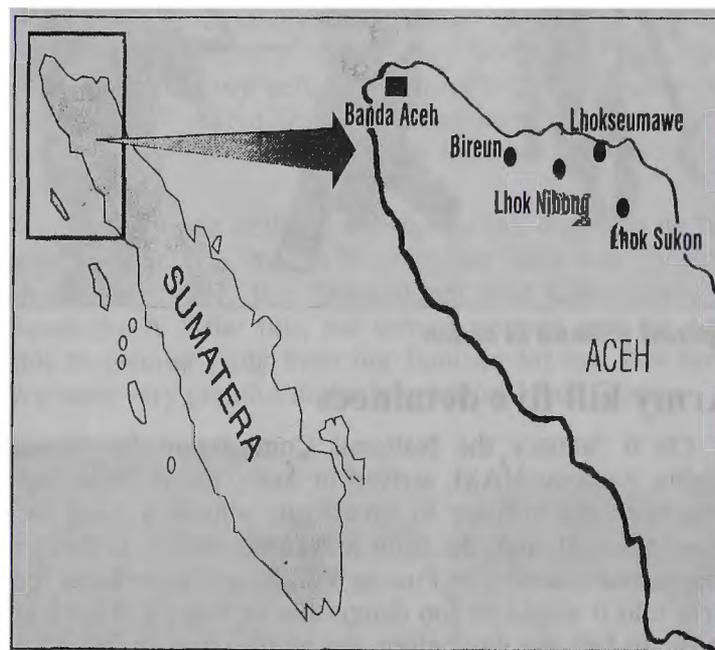
Lhok Nibong

The renewed violence in Aceh climaxed with the kidnapping and killing of eight soldiers on the road around Lhok Nibong, Simpang Ulim subdistrict, East Aceh, coupled with the military's equally violent response. Local people were said to be carrying out 'sweeping' operations and identity card searches because of the ninjas, when they stopped a bus carrying sixteen soldiers from the local infantry brigade on their way to Medan. Later, Marine Major Edyanto Chairuddin and two of his men were kidnapped near Padang Sakti village, East Aceh. The army's response was unequivocal. In sharp contrast to its 'commitment' to resolving the thousands of cases of human rights abuses committed against civilians in Aceh, the military pulled out

all the stops in the search for its personnel. This included drafting in hundreds of reinforcements from Medan and Jakarta, including airborne troops and Brimob and Gegana elite police forces. Twenty-five civilians were arrested for the kidnappings and accused of being members of GAM.

Operasi Assert Authority '99

In retaliation, the army launched *Operasi Wibawa 99* or 'Assert Authority' operation, a joint police-military operation, headed by the police with two main aims – to apprehend Ahmad Kandang and his followers, and to find the missing men. In January, three of the kidnapped soldiers' bodies were found in the Arakundo River, East Aceh. The bloodthirsty impact of Operation Assert Authority was immediate.



On 3 January, Lhokseumawe and the surrounding area was described as being like a war zone. In the early morning, security forces continued their search for Ahmad Kandang and Major Edyanto, while villagers from Pusong marched into Lhokseumawe towards the North Aceh Regent's office, about 1km away, to protest about central government indifference. The military soon began to fire indiscriminately on men, women and children on the streets of Lhokseumawe, also carrying out similar action in Kandang and Paloh, Muara Dua subdistrict, as well as Simpang Kramat and Buloh Blang Ara in Kuta Makmur subdistrict. Local estimates suggest that as many as forty people were killed in and around Lhokseumawe on that day. More than 150 were arrested and dozens were treated in hospital. While some reports say 23 died, local people suggest that many bodies were whisked away by loved ones to avoid contact with the authorities and reprisals.

The military has attempted to blame the deaths on GAM, accusing them of shooting the Pusong villagers in the back, and using women as shields, but eye-witnesses from Pusong vehemently deny this, stating categorically that it was the soldiers who shot fleeing civilians in the back. Many government buildings were destroyed by fire in Lhokseumawe, as well as several police stations and sub-district offices in nearby districts.

The next day, military returned to Pusong, launching an ambush on the village mosque. Fifteen men were arrested accused of being followers of Ahmad Kandang. Four of the

detainees are expected to be charged with sedition. Although the men offered no resistance, the excessive force used by the military to attack the mosque angered local people, who attempted to break into the compound of the 011/Lilawangsa regional military post as well as the regent's office. The security forces fired into the crowd. One victim, Zailani, from Nisam subdistrict, was taken to Cut Meutia hospital, but died of gunshot wounds.



Operasi Wibawa in action

Army kill five detainees

On 6 January, the National Commission for Human Rights, Komnas HAM, arrived in Aceh, partly under pressure from the military to investigate abuses against their members. Although the team met some victims of military abuses and travelled to Pusong village and elsewhere, they were told it would be too dangerous for them to visit Kandang. In fact, the day before, the military had sealed off all roads to and from Kandang. Everyone was rounded up to be questioned about their involvement with GAM and no one was allowed to leave.

The day after the Commission members returned to Jakarta, the military carried out more attacks on the people of Aceh. At crack of dawn on 9 January, an *Operasi Wibawa* joint task-force headed by Police Lieutenant Colonel Iskandar Hasan ambushed Meunasah Blang Kandang village, Muara Dua subdistrict, in search of the alleged separatist leader, Ahmad Kandang. Within hours, the task-force had apprehended and detained forty people who were suspected of being sympathisers of Ahmad Kandang. Seven were apprehended in Meunasah Blang Kandang and the others in Kuta Blang, when the task force intercepted a convoy of people headed towards Lhokseumawe.

Most of the detainees were taken and held in a youth group's building, whilst two were taken away for treatment to Lhokseumawe General Hospital. They were Zulkifli Mahmud, 35, who was shot in the leg during the struggle at Kuta Blang, and Herman Husein, who later died of deep wounds to the head and body. Another man, Iwan Sukadi, was also taken to hospital with them, after he had been attacked by separatist sympathisers.

For much of the day, the 38 detainees were interrogated and during this process, some soldiers had to be restrained by other soldiers from beating their captives. Ten detain-

ees were taken away to the North Aceh police command for further investigation.

Then all of a sudden, around 50 soldiers from a number of different units ambushed the building and began to beat and torture the detainees. As a result of the beatings and torture, five died in hospital and another 23 were hospitalised with serious injuries.

Show trials

On 30 January, Major Bayu Nadjib, the officer responsible for the attack, was sentenced to six years' imprisonment and discharged from the army, after having been found guilty as charged – of assault. Medical evidence presented at the court martial of Major Bayu and five other soldiers proved without doubt that the five deaths were as a direct result of the injuries inflicted by them. It is incomprehensible that men responsible for such heinous and cynical crimes should not have been charged with murder. Although the military has said that it would try a total of 28 soldiers, 'to set an example', eye-witnesses claim that over one hundred soldiers took part in the attack. On 27 January, another four soldiers were sentenced to seven years imprisonment, as well as being discharged.

Ishak Daud given twenty years

An Acehnese prisoner who went on trial for his activities as a member of GAM, the Free Aceh Movement, has been sentenced to twenty years. Sentence was passed on 4 December.

Ishak Daud was forcibly repatriated from Malaysia in March last year in violation of the UN Convention on Refugees. He was immediately arrested and went on trial last year. [See *TAPOL Bulletin*, No 149/150, December 1998]

During the trial, he was moved to several different prisons. The early sessions were held in Lhokseumawe district court but the authorities took the highly unusual step of shifting the trial to Sabang because the trial was drawing so much public interest that it was causing 'security problems' for the police. After sentence was passed, he was transferred to a high-security prison in Pematang Siantar, North Sumatra, and then again to a Class III prison in Siborong-borong, North Tapanuli also in North Sumatra.

The authorities have justified these frequent movements on the grounds that Daud 'causes unrest' wherever he is held. *

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Following our conversation, we took photos of an old Dutch army cemetery in Peucut where 2,200 criminal soldiers are buried, including six generals. We studied the names engraved on the portals. Some were Ambonese, but most were Javanese. As he looked at the names, Nurdin said: 'The Acehnese never went to Java to kill anyone. But the Javanese came here to kill us. First, they came with the Dutch, and now they're here again on their own.' *

From *Wordt Vervolgd*, Year 32, February 1999, the publication of the Dutch Section of Amnesty International.

‘You’d better come along with us...’

In 1990, the Indonesian armed forces arrested dozens of intellectuals suspected of supporting the Free Aceh Movement. Among them was Drs Nurdin Abdul Rachman, lecturer in English language and literature at the Syah Kuala University in Banda Aceh. He was sentenced to nine years, increased to 13 years on appeal. He was released last October. He is interviewed by Wiecher Hulst.

‘I studied at the University of Reading in the UK from January until April 1990. It took a lot of time and money to get my documents in Jakarta which made me feel I was being discriminated against because I was Acehnese. I publicly complained about this. I also spoke about the discriminatory system of wages between the regions.

‘In 1990, several of my friends were arrested, including Mulkan Usman, for hoisting the Free Aceh flag. From that day on, he was under surveillance. He was eventually given a 15-year sentence. Apparently, the authorities linked me to him and I was arrested on 15 October 1990. Late at night, at 11pm, I was picked up by army officers without an arrest warrant. They said, ‘We want some information from you. You’d better come along with us...’

‘They took me to a military intelligence camp in Lam Pineung where I was tortured, day and night, for three months. I was accused of rebellion, of funding the Free Aceh guerrillas and of holding secret meetings. None of this was true, but whenever I denied anything, they tortured me. They attached electric wires to my teeth and ears and wound up a contraption like a phone, to produce electricity. The pain was unbearable. They also beat me without stop. In the end, I confessed to everything. It took the interrogators one month to get all of us to say the same thing about a secret meeting that had allegedly been held in a textile factory called Kuta Alam Tailor. Afterwards, they arrested the factory director.. He knew nothing but got six years. He was eventually released in August 1996, before serving his full sentence.

‘After we had all confessed, we were taken to prison in Lhok Nga where we were tortured again, but not so badly as before. Here too the personnel were all military. At night, they would come to the prison drunk, throw stones at us and beat us with their rifle butts. They asked all kinds of stupid questions like, ‘How many weapons did you bring from abroad?’ and ‘How many people have you killed?’

‘They cursed us and said: ‘You are worse than pigs.’ The military who tortured us in the military intelligence were Lieutenant Sumitro (known as Ucok), Second Lieutenant Thamrin, Sergeant Untung, Sergeant Sastrowidoyo, Sergeant Wakiman and Sergeant Zulfian (an Acehnese). Most of them were Javanese. They have all left Banda Aceh. We would very much like them to go on trial but there’s not much chance of that happening at present, because people from the old regime still hold senior positions in the present government.

‘During my trial, I was closely guarded by soldiers so I didn’t dare to retract my confession. I knew that if I had

done so, I would have been tortured again. Five days before the trial, five prisoners were taken from Lhok Nga and heavily tortured for a whole day. We never saw them again. One was my cellmate Amiruddin, the others were Mahdi Yusuf, Abdullah, Hasan Ibrahim and Ahmad Idris. This is why we were so afraid and repeated the confessions in court.

‘The only one with the courage to tell the court he had been tortured was Adnan Beuranshah. This was because, on 12 July 1991, the International Red Cross came to Banda Aceh. After this, the torture stopped and we were able to receive visits from our families for this first time. We were very grateful to the International Red Cross.



‘On 22 October 1998 I was released but on two conditions, that I would work hard and not laze around, and that I would only mix with good people. The question is, who do they mean? I am now teaching English freelance because I was not able to get my university job back. I also earn money selling agricultural products, to keep me and my family alive.

‘In prison, I wrote three books in English. I hope one day to have them published. One deals with the history of the liberation of the Acehnese people and with injustices in the economy, in education and in culture; I’m afraid that Acehnese culture will disappear before long. I developed my views about Acehnese culture while in prison. Before my arrest, I was not an Acehnese nationalist, but I became one in prison.’

continued on page 14

Major reshuffle in ABRI

At the beginning of the New Year ABRI, the Indonesian armed forces, underwent a major reshuffle when more than one hundred high-ranking officers were promoted or demoted. A few months earlier the Habibie government had suggested that no reshuffles should take place in ABRI until after the general elections, but the divisions within ABRI had become too intense to be left alone.

It was General Wiranto who had the main say in the reshuffle. As commander-in-chief of ABRI and minister of defence, Wiranto used the reshuffle to place some of his most trusted officers in key positions.

The big loser was Lt. General Prabowo (Suharto's son-in-law) and his gang. Most of this group have been marginalised. In August last year Prabowo was discharged from the army because of his direct involvement in the kidnap and disappearance of dozens of human rights activists.

ABRI is arguably facing the toughest test since its birth in 1945. Official figures from 1998 confirm the extent of the turmoil in Indonesia: there were 2,000 student demonstrations, 1,300 rallies by NGOs and political groups, 500 strikes and 50 riots. So far more than eighty police stations have been burned down by angry crowds. A 'shoot on sight' order has been issued by General Wiranto to quell the riots, a sign of desperation if ever there was one.

With divisions within ABRI having flared up, the major aim of the reshuffle was to try to close ranks again. Undoubtedly one of the biggest strains on the force has been the new policy on East Timor and Wiranto's endorsement of it.

The reformers

The group of so-called reformers have gained in importance. Army watchers see Lt.-General Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono as the main reformer in ABRI. Previously Chief-of-Staff for Social and Political Affairs (*Kassospol*), his job was renamed Chief-of-Staff for Territorial Affairs. There was no such position formerly and in reality he still functions as *Kassospol*. The term *sospol* has become a curse for the reform movement as it reflects ABRI's dominant role in society, identified as its dual function or *dwi-fungsi*. The *Kassospol* has always been one of the key positions in ABRI, as he represents ABRI's political face to the outside world. It is often argued that the *Kassospol* enjoys a higher profile than the Army Chief-of-Staff.

Lt.-General Bambang Yudhoyono had the tough job of 'selling' ABRI to the public at a time when ABRI's credibility has sunk to its lowest point because of the many killings and kidnappings and because of its deep involvement with the ousted and much reviled Suharto. As head of the ABRI fraction in Parliament, he fought hard to protect ABRI's 75 appointed ABRI seats. In the end, a compromise was reached, giving ABRI 38 seats. Bambang came out of the conflict relatively unscathed; his social skills helped him project the image of the gentle face of ABRI.

Other reformers are Lt.-General Agus Widjojo who was promoted from *Asrenum*, Assistant for General Planning to become Commander of *Sesko ABRI*, the Armed Forces Staff and Command School. Another reformer, Major General Agus Wirahadikusumah, formerly Chief of the Army Staff and Command School, took over the position of *Asrenum*. These three reformers are seen as the ones most willing to accept the new paradigm of ABRI gradually returning to barracks.



General Wiranto

The Kostrad gang

Four-star General Wiranto has spent most of his army career in the *Kostrad* strategic reserve troops. *Kostrad* is the most prestigious outfit in ABRI and is equipped with the most modern weaponry. Its two divisions are geared towards a rapid deployment strategy complete with airborne troops and modern infantry equipment. Key positions after the reshuffle have gone to *Kostrad* officers, notably Lt-General Sugiono who was promoted to the prestigious position of *Kasum ABRI*, ABRI Chief of General Affairs. Another *Kostrad* stalwart, Major-General Ryam-

izard Ryacudu was given the difficult post of military commander of *Brawijaya*, the East Java Military Command. Lt. General Johny Lumintang was appointed to the post of deputy army chief-of-staff.

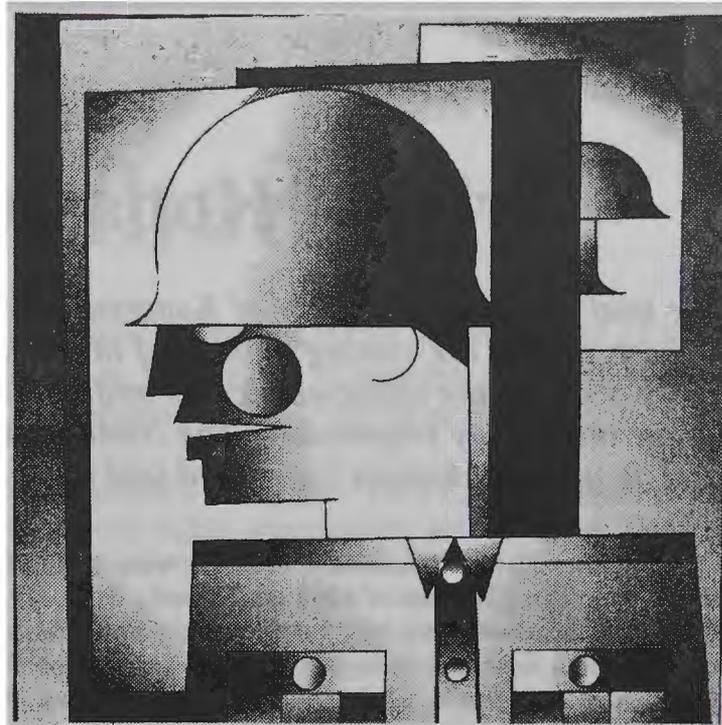
Demotions for the Prabowo group

To speak about the 'Prabowo group' is not entirely accurate because Prabowo made coalitions with a wide range of political tendencies. One tendency within ABRI that was sidelined was the so-called *ABRI Hijau*, the green ABRI. This tendency is seen as part of the 'structural' Muslim groups, a relatively new phenomenon in ABRI politics. *ABRI hijau* is contrasted with the more mainstream ABRI officers, often called *ABRI Merah-Putih* or the red-and-white ABRI, named after the Indonesian flag. General Wiranto is regarded as the main representative of *ABRI Merah-Putih*.

Key officers of *ABRI Hijau* have all been removed from the top, notably Lt.-General Fachrul Razi, the former chief of general affairs and now given a bureaucratic post as secretary-general at the defence ministry. Another key post held by a *ABRI Hijau* stalwart, Major-General Zacky Anwar Makarim, director of the intelligence agency, *BIA*, has been taken over by Major-General Tyasno Sudarto. Major-General Zacky Anwar Makarim joins the ranks of an increasing number of senior officers seconded to Cilangkap without a proper function.

Major-General Djoko Subroto, military commander of the East Java *Brawijaya* Command, also part of the *ABRI Hijau* core, was shifted to the powerless post of inspector-general of ABRI. Another notorious *ABRI Hijau* stalwart, Major-General Kivlan Zein has been despatched to the obscure post as member of the team of advisors to the army chief-of-staff. Political tabloids in Jakarta report that both Djoko Subroto and Kivlan Zein have been directly involved in sinister political games. Apparently Djoko Subroto endorsed the mysterious killings of Muslim leaders in East Java while Kivlan Zein, was seen in Jakarta commanding para-military units during the MPR, the People's Assembly, session last November.

For several years Prabowo was also commander of the notorious *Kopassus*, the red beret commando unit. The ambitious Prabowo used *Kopassus* to boost his career. *Kopassus* had always been the 'creme de la creme' of ABRI but under the command of Prabowo it really went to the extremes. *Kopassus* members enjoyed better facilities, drove better cars, had better housing and even had their own shopping mall. *Kopassus* officers dominated Cilangkap. Prabowo openly showed ambitions to become the number one in ABRI. In the hectic days before Suharto's downfall, an open conflict emerged between Wiranto and Prabowo. Troops from both sides were roaming in the streets of Jakarta. The real story hasn't been revealed yet, because everybody in ABRI is tight-lipped about this affair. The end of the story: Prabowo lost and three months later he was discharged from the army. With him, other key *Kopassus* stalwarts were dismissed, notably Major General Sjafrie Sjamsudin, the military commander of Jakarta, Major General Muchdi, the *Kopassus* commander and some middle ranking *Kopassus* officers. They were involved in many sinister games, including the kidnapping of activists [see item on trial]. The ABRI top is frantically reorganising *Kopassus* to get this elite squad back on track.



The only important Prabowo soul-mate left is Four-star General Subagyo, clinging to the post of Chief-of-Staff. He is the only key *Kopassus* officer left from the Prabowo-gang. *Kopassus* consist of 6,000 soldiers and it was obviously not possible for the Cilangkap mainstream to alienate *Kopassus* too much. It is a public secret that Wiranto and Subagyo can't get along very well. Lt General Johny Lumintang, also a *Kopassus* officer but on Wiranto's side, has been put by Wiranto in the position of Deputy Chief of Staff. To keep an eye on Subagyo, observers say.

ABRI's political role

Demands for an end to the *dwifungsi*, the dual function doctrine of ABRI, continue to be voiced. Most opposition groups put this high on their agendas. ABRI has been forced to retreat somewhat but ABRI's dominance in Indonesia's political life in the last three decades has been so overwhelming that it will take some time before it can really end. The ABRI reformers are agreed that they need to make further retreats, such as ABRI officers in civilian posts gradually handing over to civilians who have been democratically elected, notably in the regional administration.

ABRI has also officially announced its withdrawal from Golkar, the government party, something that would have been difficult to imagine in the Suharto era. A group of retired generals have decided to leave Golkar and established a new political party. The leader of the new party is retired General Edi Sudradjat, previously ABRI Commander-in-Chief and also ex-Minister of Defence.

The removal of ABRI from political life is a continuous process that will gather speed as civil society becomes stronger. But this is easier said than done. In a country heading towards destabilisation on so many fronts, ABRI will continue to play a dominant role in society. The struggle to drive ABRI back to the barracks is far from over. ★

Trial of Kopassus abductors a farce

The trial of eleven members of Kopassus, the army's special forces, for kidnapping pro-democracy activists during the closing months of the Suharto regime has been condemned by human rights activists, some of the abducted victims and the families of thirteen missing men as a farce and a cover-up for those truly responsible. The National Human Rights Commission and others have called the trial an abuse of human rights and said it should be abandoned.

Altogether 23 pro-democracy activists were abducted during the closing months of 1997 and in early 1998. Nine of the abducted men were later released and some publicly testified about their horrifying experiences. One of the abducted men was found dead while the other thirteen are still unaccounted for.

Role of Prabowo ignored

The stunning injustice of this trial lies in the fact that following an army investigation undertaken last August into the abductions, the armed forces commander-in-chief, General Wiranto announced his decision to discharge Lt-General Prabowo, son-in-law of the now-deposed dictator Suharto, who was the commander of *Kopassus*, the elite commandos of the army, at the time of the abductions. Amazingly, however, this was an 'honorable' discharge and it was not followed by a decision to place Prabowo under arrest and formally charge him. General Wiranto said at the time that charges *might* be preferred against Prabowo, but this did not happen. On the contrary, shortly after his discharge, Prabowo left the country in a cloud of secrecy and subsequently turned up in Jordan where he is now living in permanent exile under the protection of his close friend, King Abdullah.

In stark contrast to the findings of the army's investigations, the eleven men now on trial before a military court are said in the indictment to have acted on their own initiative. Furthermore, it implies that they were justified in what they did because they were acting in the interests of safeguarding national stability, under threat from a bunch of 'radicals'. The eleven accused include one major, seven captains and three sergeants.

Moreover, the indictment fails to make any mention of the torture to which the abducted men were subjected, nor does it hold the accused officers responsible for the thirteen abductees whose fate still remains a mystery. The indictment concerns itself solely with the nine men who were released.

Four of the abducted men have been called as witnesses but they have announced that they will refuse to testify in protest at the unsatisfactory nature of the indictment. They said they will not collaborate with any proceedings until the thirteen missing men are released or an account is made of what has happened to them.

The chairman of the National Human Rights Commission, Marzuki Darusman, has also roundly condemned the

trial as unfair and a violation of human rights, and has called for it to be halted. 'The whole trial is staged and designed to minimise the damage done to ABRI and it seems it will lead to a miscarriage of justice,' Marzuki said. [*Jakarta Post*, 2 January 1999]



Wiranto is clearly bent on closing ranks within the armed forces and has decided to mount a show trial of lower ranks while protecting people like Prabowo and Suharto. The trial has nothing to do with ending impunity that members of the armed forces have enjoyed since Suharto came to power in 1965.

Political significance of the abductions

One of the most outspoken of the abducted men, Pius Lustrilangang, strongly condemned the failure of the prosecutor to charge the accused with torture. 'For the whole time we were held, we were tortured night and day, beaten, tortured with lighted cigarettes, electricity and other things.'

He said that it was unacceptable for the men to be indicted on criminal charges. 'The abductions were part of a plan drawn up by Suharto to sustain himself in power. We were abducted because we were protesting against his re-appointment as president so it was part and parcel of Suharto's political intrigues.' He was convinced that Suharto was the one who gave the order and that the armed forces commander in chief General Wiranto cannot evade responsibility for the abductions. [*Wawasan*, 24 December 1998]

Pius emerged from his abduction in April last year and despite the trauma and the personal risks he exposed himself to, he spoke out about his terrible experiences at a press conference in Jakarta and almost immediately went to Washington to testify before members of Congress.

The head of *Kontras*, the Commission for the Disappears and to Combat Violence, Munir, believes that other elements within the armed forces besides *Kopassus* were also involved in the abductions, including the Jakarta military command and has insisted throughout that the trial should not take place until all the missing men have been accounted for. *

Indicting Suharto

The proceedings against General Pinochet of Chile for crimes committed while he was head of state have focused world attention on the need to bring dictators to justice. A campaign is developing to have Suharto indicted for the crimes against humanity perpetrated by his New Order regime.

It is an affront to justice that the former dictator has been allowed to slip into comfortable retirement without being held responsible for the many atrocities committed during his 32-year despotic rule. Although there have been persistent calls for him to be tried for corruption and other economic crimes, that appears unlikely to happen while the present power holders remain in position.

The trial of Suharto and other senior or retired armed forces officers for crimes against humanity is now essential. (Other international criminal charges, such as genocide and war crimes are also possible, but may be technically more difficult to prosecute.)

A trial should serve several purposes. It should satisfy the need for punishment, deterrence and belated justice for the many victims and help heal the wounds inflicted by 32 years of brutal repression. It should also contribute to the Indonesian people's understanding of their recent past and the ideologies and power structures which lay behind the massive violations of human rights committed by the Suharto regime. This understanding is a pre-requisite to the building of a democratic future based on justice and fundamental human rights.



Growing demands for indictment

The international focus on the case against Pinochet has led several lawyers and commentators in Indonesia to call

for Suharto's indictment. On 15 January, five Indonesian human rights organisations petitioned the National Commission on Human Rights (*Komnas Ham*) to conduct a comprehensive investigation into his crimes. This is an important initiative, but it remains to be seen whether *Komnas Ham* will respond positively.

In Yogyakarta, Central Java, a group of former PKI prisoners has started to investigate the 1965 killings in that area with a view to establishing a database of evidence against Suharto.

Moves have also been made by the Portuguese section of the International Commission of Jurists to have Suharto extradited to Portugal for crimes in East Timor. That initiative is, however, likely to fail since there is no extradition treaty between Portugal and Indonesia and Suharto will be wary of travelling to a third country which might extradite him. In any event, Portuguese groups may now consider it prudent to desist from any action which might antagonise the Indonesian Government at this sensitive time in negotiations on the future of East Timor.

Possible mechanisms

It is important that Indonesian groups take the lead in the campaign to indict Suharto and their initiatives should be watched closely and supported from abroad. Ideally, Suharto should be called to account before an Indonesian tribunal, but if that does not prove possible, there are several options at the international level.

The Pinochet precedent - according to which a Spanish judge has compiled a series of charges relating to offences committed against Spanish citizens - could be used, but it is most applicable to East Timorese citizens living in Portugal or Australia. In their case, it may not be advisable for the reasons stated above.

The Permanent International Criminal Court established by the UN in June 1998 is not an option since it cannot deal with crimes committed before it was set up. However, an *ad hoc* tribunal similar to those relating to the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda might be possible if sufficient international political will can be generated and if a new Indonesian regime can be persuaded to acknowledge the jurisdiction of such a tribunal. There is a recent precedent in the case of Cambodia. Following a resolution by the UN General Assembly, a team of experts recently visited the country to investigate crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge. The Cambodian Prime Minister has accepted the establishment of an international tribunal as long as it operates outside the country.

At present, the indictment of Suharto is not high on the list of priorities of the international community, and key players, such as the US and the UK, may be reluctant to provide support in view of their complicity in some of Suharto's most heinous crimes.

For this reason, it is necessary for campaigners to concentrate initially on raising the profile of Suharto as a brutal dictator and on shaming the international community into taking action against him.

Raising awareness

Following the Pinochet case, commentators and legal experts have speculated on the possible trials of other notorious criminals such as Idi Amin, 'Baby Doc' Duvalier, and Saddam Hussein but little has been said about Suharto. The scale of his crimes has not yet entered into international consciousness.

Ironically, Suharto's anti-communist purge in the 1960s was considered to be such an admirable precedent by Pinochet's troops that they scrawled the warning 'Jakarta is coming' on the walls of the presidential palace during the 1973 coup against Salvador Allende. Even then, the violence they unleashed, resulting in more than 3,000 deaths and disappearances, was nothing compared to that inflicted by the Suharto regime on its hundreds of thousands of murder victims.

One means of raising awareness is the establishment of an Alternative International Tribunal similar to the Bertrand Russell tribunal set up to investigate Vietnam War

atrocities. This will need the support of partners such as the International Commission of Jurists and the US-based Centre for Constitutional Rights, which successfully sued Major-General Sintong Pandjaitan in relation to the murder of Kamal Bamadaj, a Malaysian student during the Santa Cruz massacre in East Timor.

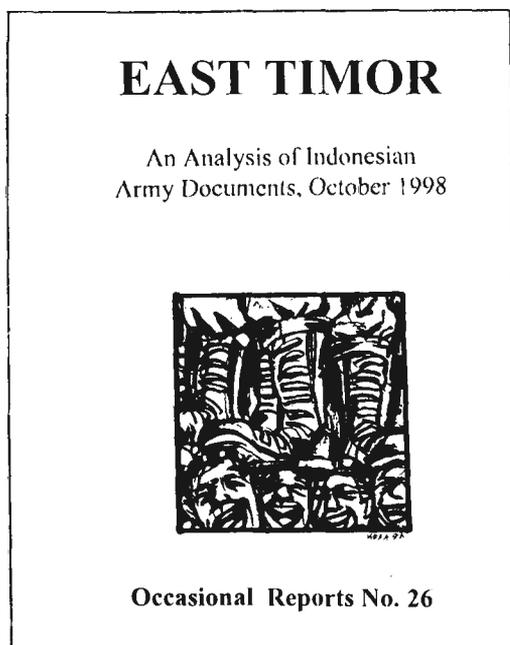
Power and impunity

Proceedings against Suharto should also help to curb the malign influence he continues to exert over everyday political events, and undermine some of the enduring power structures founded on his patronage network and the privileged position of the armed forces.

Unless action is taken against him, Suharto's continued freedom and impunity will remain a dangerous source of instability at this crucial time in Indonesia's democratic development. Followers of Suharto have been linked with much of the violence which has shaken the country in recent months. In particular, a close friend and ally, Yorrys Raweyai, who heads the *Pemuda Pancasila* youth group has been questioned about his involvement in provoking recent religious rioting in Ambon, which has so far claimed well over 100 lives [see separate item].

Meanwhile press reports have indicated that the Suharto family is funding up to 70 political parties in an attempt to influence the June elections and prevent his eventual trial.

TAPOL intends to play a prominent role in the campaign to indict Suharto over the next 12 months and comments and offers of support from our readers will be much appreciated. *



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Governments shamed by TV programmes

In January, two powerful television programmes – ‘The Mark Thomas Comedy Product’ and ‘The Timor Conspiracy’ by John Pilger - caused acute official embarrassment by eliciting admissions of torture by the Indonesians and exposing continuing British complicity in Indonesian repression through its arms sales policy.

At an arms fair in Greece, Major General Agus Widjojo, the Chief of Indonesia's Staff and Command School and formerly the Assistant of General Planning, admitted to the Mark Thomas team that torture is practised by the armed forces. ‘We did some tortures to protect the security of society’, he said.

Mark Thomas – a stand-up comedian whose dramatised stunts have exposed many uncomfortable truths about those in power – had set up a fake company to provide public relations advice to the arms industry on how to respond to negative publicity about human rights.

His meeting with Widjojo led to a session with the defence attaché to the Indonesian embassy in London, Colonel Halim, who confirmed that torture is used and volunteered the information that the Indonesian army is using Saracen and Saladin armoured vehicles, made by the UK company Alvis, in East Timor. The British Government has always refused to admit that British military equipment is used in East Timor.

The programme also included a conversation, recorded in Greece, with Paul Greenwood, the military business director of Pains Wessex, a UK company based in Salisbury. He described how officials from the Department of Trade and Industry have no qualms about UK companies selling equipment via licensed production facilities in third countries (thereby avoiding UK export licensing regulations) and said: ‘Just as long as we're not shipping in the UK, they don't give a toss.’ Pains Wessex has in the past supplied tear gas to Indonesia.

The Timor Conspiracy

John Pilger's updated version of his 1994 *Death of a Nation* reminded us once again of the British Government's complicity in the tragedy of East Timor. In the face of official cynicism, the British public registered its solidarity with the East Timorese people by telephoning in their thousands after the programme. Over 200,000 call attempts were made.

New footage included Robin Cook, then Labour's front bench spokesman on foreign affairs, saying in 1994 ‘Hawk aircraft – made by British Aerospace – have been observed on bombing raids since 1984’.

Current Foreign Office Minister Derek Fatchett displayed depressingly familiar sophistry by evading Pilger's questions about arms export licences granted by the Labour Government and by asserting that the Government does not have the power to revoke a licence for the export of more Hawk aircraft granted by the Conservatives in November 1996. His assertion is wrong. The power to revoke licences is set out clearly in the export

control legislation. For reasons which have never been fully explained, the Government has abdicated responsibility and refused to exercise that power.

Parliamentary responses

Questioned by MPs about the Mark Thomas revelations, ministers resorted to their favourite tactic of blaming previous governments. The armoured vehicles being used in East Timor were, they said, exported in the 1960s and ‘no formal mechanisms exist for monitoring the use of British defence equipment once it has been exported’.

This failure to monitor previously-exported equipment is a clear dereliction of the Government's duty. Indonesia has given assurances to the British Government as a sovereign entity (not to a government in power at a particular time) that equipment will not be used for internal repression or deployed in East Timor. The present government has a duty to ensure that those assurances are not broken irrespective of who granted the licence.

Meanwhile a parliamentary written answer to Ann Clwyd revealed that a further 25 export licences were granted for military exports to Indonesia in the period 11 May 1998 to 31 December 1998. A total of 92 licences have now been granted since Labour came to power. Only seven have been refused.

At the end of last year, two parliamentary reports – the Trade and Industry Committee's report on ‘Strategic Export Controls’ and the Foreign Affairs Committee's report on ‘Foreign Policy and Human Rights’ – were published and cited submissions made by TAPOL. The Foreign Affairs Committee took particular account of our criticism of the Government's ‘constructive partnership’ with Indonesia under Suharto. The Committee criticised the implementation of this policy, saying it ‘...seems to have been seriously flawed, as the Government continued to work actively...with the corrupt and moribund regime of Suharto until his overthrow.’

The Trade and Industry Committee's report reserved judgement on the efficacy of the Government's new export licensing criteria until the publication of the long-awaited annual report on arms exports. This continues to be delayed with the latest excuse being that Customs and Excise got their facts wrong. Presumably the spin doctors are also having trouble putting the necessary gloss on the report. Further developments are awaited. *

Dialogue in West Papua faces obstruction

An initiative taken by many NGOs, tribal leaders and the Protestant and Catholic churches in West Papua to enter into dialogue with the government in Jakarta about the future of West Papua is being met with obstruction and manipulation by the authorities. This could result in renewed confrontation in the territory where the pressure for fundamental change has greatly intensified since the downfall of Suharto.

The idea of entering into dialogue with the central government as a way of reducing tensions emerged in the wake of a number of flag-raising incidents last year. Raising the West Papuan flag has long been a traditional form of peaceful struggle by West Papuans in defiance of their country's annexation as Indonesia's province of 'Irian Jaya'. Flag-raising ceremonies in Manokwari, Sorong, and Wamena last year reached a climax when the West Papuan flag was raised and kept aloft for five days in the harbour of Biak at the beginning of July 1998. The army responded with a brutal assault which left an unknown number of people dead and many injured.

The army regional commander, Major-General Amir Sembiring declared that such activities would be regarded as acts of treason and treated accordingly, and the leader of the Biak action, **Filipe Yakob Samuel Karma**, was tried and sentenced to six years for rebellion. Meanwhile, those responsible for the shooting and killing of perhaps scores of people in Biak's harbour have not been called to account.

Calls for a national dialogue

The initiative for a dialogue with the central government was taken by *FORERI*, the *Forum for the Reconciliation of Irian Jaya Society*, which was set up in Jayapura on 24 July last year. [See *TAPOL Bulletin* No 148, September 1998]

The dialogue initiative was first mooted when a fact-finding team from the Indonesian Parliament visited West Papua in July following the outcry provoked by the killings in Biak. The call was renewed at a seminar in Jakarta on 1 August, at which West Papuans suggested that the dialogue should be followed by an international dialogue involving the UN. The way in which the UN sealed the territory's fate following the farcical 'Act of Free Choice' in 1969 has rankled with West Papuans ever since and is now being openly discussed in the Indonesian national press. [See for instance, 'Human rights violations continue in Irian Jaya' by Yohanis G. Bonay, in *The Jakarta Post*, 17 December 1998.]

The idea received a cautious welcome from the Habibie administration and his Secretary of State, Akbar Tanjung, who is also General Chairman of GOLKAR, was put in charge of making the arrangements. Initially, it was announced that the dialogue would take place when President Habibie made a visit to the territory in January for an unconnected event. But disagreements soon emerged over the



Demonstration of Papuans in front of the US Embassy in Jakarta. Besides protesting against human rights abuses, they also called for a review of Freeport's contract.

agenda. While West Papuans made it clear that they wanted an open agenda, with all the options - autonomy, federation and independence - on the table, the government began to dither and the January talks did not take place.

When Akbar Tanjung announced that month that the dialogue with Habibie would take place 'after *Idil Fitri*' (the end of Ramadhan on 19-20 January), and that the framework would be Irian's retention within the Indonesian Republic, a highly sceptical Protestant minister from Timika, Rev. Nato Gobay, wondered whether he meant this year's *Idul Fitri* or next year's. The Bishop of Jayapura, Mgr Leo Laba Ladjar said the dialogue was needed 'to find out why Irianese demand independence from Indonesia'. [*The Jakarta Post*, 23 January]

Groups in the different regions meanwhile are appointing their delegations to the dialogue in anticipation of it taking place. In Manokwari, the 20-person delegation will be headed by the *bupati* or district chief, William A. Ramar. He and others made representations to the National Human Rights Commission in Jakarta, seeking a guarantee that these preparations for the dialogue could proceed without fear and intimidation. After it became known that the Manokwari delegation would express the local community's desire to secede from Indonesia, delegation members had been subjected to terror and intimidation. [*Kompas*, 15 January]

Another way of countering the pro-independence upsurge is the activities of Yulian Yap Marey, a former

member of the armed resistance, the OPM, who has since fallen under the army's wing, to persuade villagers not to support independence. Following a visit to a border village, near Skouw, villagers are reported to have said that all they were interested in was getting their basic needs, not discussing independence. Marey is also working hard to bring together 'traditional leaders' from all districts to support the idea of 'otonomisasi' or autonomy. The decision will be published in book form and circulated through the territory. 'What I am stressing to the entire community is that we should forget about independence and focus on preparing for a better future through autonomy,' said Marey. [Cendrawasih Pos, 15 December 1998.]

Those connected with FORERI see this as a campaign being engineered by the army to roll back the tide of opinion in favour of independence.

The Council of the Amungme tribal people, Lemasa, declared that it could not accept a government proposal to call the dialogue a *silaturahmi* or 'social get-together' and said it would not take part if the government failed to stop the manipulations of the local government and the armed forces which were causing confusion and splitting the community. [See resolution adopted by the Lemasa congress in December 1998.]

Another source of disruption is the involvement of Yorrys Raweyai, a West Papuan who chairs *Pemuda Pancasila*, a highly-suspect youth organisation closely allied to the Suharto family which is being used to provoke social clashes in various parts of the country (see separate item on the unrest in Ambon). Yorrys has managed somehow to win the confidence of the FORERI branch in Jakarta. Although a staunch supporter of the New Order regime and all its basic political principles, he has recently taken the initiative in several demonstrations in favour of a free West Papua which can only be seen as provocative.

OPM and the dialogue

The *Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM)* which has been waging armed struggle in West Papua since 1965 has signalled its willingness to shift its emphasis to a political strategy and is clearly anxious to be part of the national dialogue. Last year, the OPM commander, Mathias Wenda, put out feelers to the regional military commander about a ceasefire between the two forces. This drew a cautious response from Major-General Amir Sembiring although there has been no confirmation of a ceasefire having been agreed.

In mid February, an 18-person OPM delegation arrived in Jayapura hoping to enter into talks with the military commander. The delegation included the secretary-general and the chief-of-staff of the OPM as well as the wife of Mathias Wenda. As we went to press, it was not clear whether the talks would go ahead. The members of the delegation were staying at a hotel in Jayapura and had met several officers of the military command on an informal basis. [Cendrawasih Pos, 19 February]

The 1969 'act of free choice'

Engineering opinion in West Papua has been a hallmark of Indonesian activities ever since Indonesian officials first set foot in West Papua in the early 1960s and reached its climax in 1969, during the so-called 'act of free choice'.

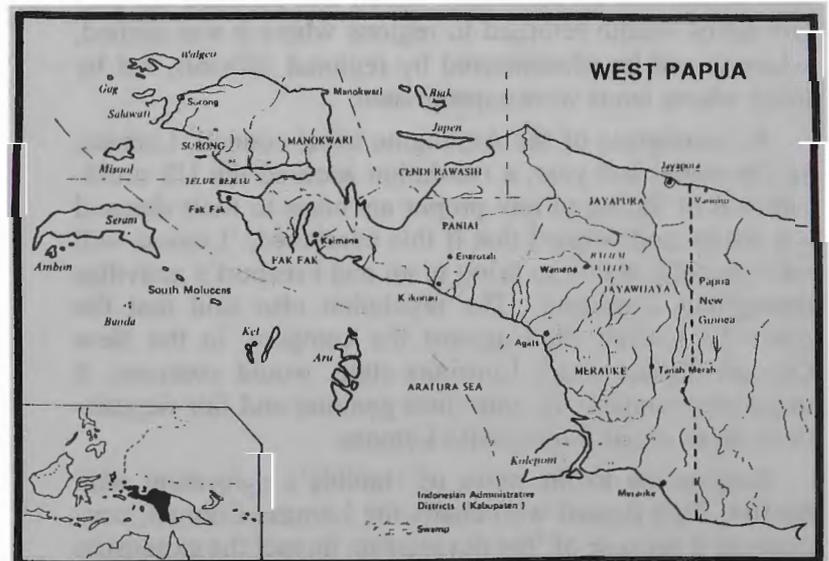
One of the Jakarta-appointed members of the council of 1025 'traditional chiefs' who took the unanimous decision on 2 August 1969 that West Papua should remain a part of

Indonesia recently described the heavy-handed pressure they were under to adopt the 'right' decision. The Rev. Origenes Hokujoku, who was one of the 101 council members selected to 'represent' the capital, Soekarnopura as it was then called, recalls how it happened:

Three weeks before the referendum, the members were isolated. Instructors continually pressured them to vote for integration with Indonesia. The members were given a piece of paper with exact instructions on what to say. 'I remember we had a final rehearsal to see if we mastered our speeches. One man resisted, he refused to present the obligatory speech. The next morning, his body was found in a gorge. General Ali Murtopo (who was in charge of the so-called referendum) tried to placate me... but on other occasions he mocked me, saying: "The Americans have landed on the moon. Why not ask them for a piece of moon for the Papuans."'

'We have been let down by the world, by the United Nations, we have been denied a free choice.' [Algemeen Dagblad, 12 December 1998]

He described what happened as 'the day all Papuans cried'.



Habibie and the question of West Papua

Now that President Habibie has said on no uncertain terms that he wants to be rid of East Timor (see separate item), how is this likely to reflect on his attitude towards the equally legitimate demand for independence for West Papua?

The answer is, not much, if at all. For the post-Suharto administration in Jakarta under Habibie, East Timor has been seen as an endless drain on economic resources with little coming in to the state coffers (apart from what may soon be coming in from exploitation of Timor Gap oil) whilst being a diplomatic nightmare. On the other hand, West Papua is a huge source of revenue and foreign exchange as the exploitation of its abundant resources goes on without stop, whereas the international community still fails to acknowledge the huge injustice perpetrated against the West Papuans in 1969. Therefore, Habibie can afford to ignore the pressures now building up in the territory and rely on the army to keep things in check.

Habibie moreover has his own economic interests, having dreamed up a huge project to develop hydro-power, to support heavy industries and agro-industries in the Mam-

beramo watershed, for which he has been actively seeking investment from foreign partners in Germany and elsewhere. If it goes ahead, the project will destroy a huge area of pristine forests and swamplands while dispossessing several thousand indigenous people.

Habibie has also succumbed to pressure from Jim-Bob Moffet, the executive-director of the Orleans-based parent company of the mammoth copper-and-gold mining company, Freeport for the go-ahead from Jakarta to expand its output from the present 160,000 metric tons to 300,000 metric tons per day, regardless of the devastating impact on the local environment. Habibie's decision has caused friction within his own cabinet, with the Minister for Mines, Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, insisting on holding out for an increase in the royalties paid by the company and other obligations.

Freeport in the eyes of the Amungme

But the controversy between senior officials in Jakarta is taking place without consulting the local people whose land was seized against their wishes and who have suffered degradation of their environment ever since. At best, they offer a new law on autonomy which will increase the proportion of wealth returned to regions where it was earned, where it will be administered by regional officials, not by those whose lands were expropriated.

At a congress of the Amungme tribal council, Lemasa, in December last year, a resolution accused the US multinational of failing to pay proper attention to their demand for justice and warned that if this continued, 'Lemasa will take peaceful action to bring to an end Freeport's activities throughout Amungsa'. The resolution also said that the council's lawsuit filed against the company in the New Orleans district court, Louisiana state, would continue. It urged the company to enter into genuine and fair negotiations on an equal footing with Lemasa.

Responding to the news of Habibie's agreement with Moffet, Tom Beanal who chairs the Lemasa Council, condemned it because of 'the devastating impact the expansion (of output) will have on us living around the mining field.... People in Jakarta have never asked our opinion. The government has never allowed the Irianese people to think. If we protest their decision, they will send troops to kill us.' [*The Jakarta Post*, 30 January 1999]

Trials

The man who led the flag-raising ceremony in Biak from 2 - 6 July last year, **Filipe Yacob Samuel Karma**, 42, who had held a senior position in the regional administration, has been sentenced to six years and six months for rebellion, on charges of 'separatism'. During his trial, hundreds of supporters packed the court-room and after the verdict was announced on 1 January, they marched through the streets of Biak to the prison where he was being held, singing hymns and shouting slogans against the Indonesian government and the security forces.

Two days after he was sentenced, Karma was suddenly taken from his cell in Biak Prison and bundled into a helicopter for transfer to a prison in Jayapura. The prisoner demanded to see the transfer instruction before agreeing to be moved, out of fear that he might be being kidnapped. A scuffle occurred during which a serious gunshot wound in the leg which he sustained when he and his colleagues were defending the West Papuan flag was re-opened. He

was naked by the time his assailants dragged him out of the cell. He was taken hand-cuffed and under heavy guard to Jayapura. The reason for the transfer is not clear.

Meanwhile, in Wamena, the capital of the district of Jayawijaya in the central highlands, ten people identified only by their initials, have gone on trial for their involvement in a flag-raising ceremony in Wamena on 7 July last year. One of the defendants is a 14-year old boy. They face charges that carry a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

Meanwhile, a senior police official in Jayapura has announced that the documents relating to charges against **Theus Eluay**, the highly-respected chief of the Sentani tribe, have been delivered to the public prosecutor. Theus and others who were arrested with him last October are likely to face charges of rebellion. Shortly after his arrest, Theus was released into house arrest, in an apparent move to reduce protest at the arrest of such a widely-respected figure. Shortly before his arrest, Theus was appointed head of the Conference of All Tribal Peoples of Irian Jaya, making him a man of great influence in society. It remains to be seen whether the authorities will ever see fit to put such a man on trial. *



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