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IBPP Research Associates: East Timor

Anonymous

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Author: International Peace Practitioners Network, Editor

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From the International Peace Practitioners Network (IPPN): IPPN is a project of the Peace Psychology Division of the American Psychological Association and of Psychologists for Social Responsibility. It provides a networking tool for peace work. (Contact jconnors@comp.uark.edu.) The following was forwarded to IBPP by IPPN and slightly edited by IBPP. The information has not been independently validated by IBPP.

(IPPN Commentary). This is an obviously rushed letter from someone involved in East Timor.

Friends--an hour ago, the following letter arrived from a friend, a religious Sister working for Human Rights within the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Jakarta. I send this further and add an appeal--please do what you can! PLEASE!!!

The Letter. I am sorry I opened my computer quite late. I came home at 3:00 am after taking the East Timorese Human Rights Workers from the airport. They were flown by chartered plane to Bali and later took an ordinary flight to Jakarta.

Their office, the Laws, Rights and Laws Foundation, was attacked by the military (Kopassus)--not the militia men. According to them there is no civil war but one which was created by the military using the militia men as fronts. They said that what they saw were real guns and not hand made ones. They were later taken by the Mobile Brigade to the provincial headquarters for safety before they were airlifted by a chartered plane.

Mgr. Belo had arrived in Australia after he requested his evacuation from Baucau--about 90 km east of Dili--according to the regional coordinator of UNAMET, Ms. Denise Dauphinais. The Bishop of Baucau, Mgr. Basilio do Nascimento, is still in his Diocese and was believed to have fled to the hills. Mgr. Belo was forced to leave Dili after pro-Jakarta militias attacked his residence leaving at least 25 people dead. About 5,000 internally displaced people (IDP) had taken refuge in Belo's house and lawn--hoping that the place will be untouchable to militia attacks. A priest stated that he saw around 100 floating bodies in the beach fronts near Belo's house in Lecidere. It was also reported that the parish priest, Fr. Hilario, and his co-parish priest were killed. Many of the IDPs sought refuge in the Parish Church. According to sources, many men were taken captive--especially those who sought refuge in the house of Mgr. Belo--and the sources didn't know where they were brought.

The displaced people were spread to Belu, North Central Timor, and in Kupang, Alor and East Flores. An Ujung Pandang South Sulawesi journalist who fled from Dili told an English newspaper here that the situation there was worsening due to the arrival of Besi Merah Putih, a militia group from Bobonaro some 150 Kms. west of Dili.

Meanwhile, the newly released East Timorese pro-independence leader is housed in the UK Embassy.

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Belo stated too that what was going on in East Timor was a very real attack planned by the Indonesian military and not a civil war. On Sept. 7 at midnight, Presidential decree 107 declaring martial law took effect. This, of course, includes a news blackout. Since yesterday, telephone communication to East Timor was completely cut.

We believe that hunger and disease will kill the people aside from the violent attacks done by both the militia men and the military. In two weeks time, many would have died of hunger if no emergency measures are effected. Water and food supplies are scarce. Food cannot be sent there since the military guise militia men (sic) had surrounded the place.

Jakarta-based East Timorese had expressed their fear of military intimidation and harassment. More than 90 students in Yogyakarta were sent out by their boarding houses owners.

Sources from other countries stated that UN pressure on sending a peace keeping force was treated coldly when Canada raised the Issue in the Security Council.

This is what I can tell you at present. I will further inform you about the developments here. Thank you for your concern for East Timor. Please continue to pray for them and for us too.

In Solidarity, Sr. Bernardita, SPC

--Reactive to the above letter is the following through IPPN from Andrew McNaughtan, ETISC, John M. Miller, ETAN/US, Darwin, Australia, 8 Sept, 1999, END Internet: etan-outreach@igc.apc.org, East Timor Action Network, Web site: <http://www.etan.org>. (Edited by IBPP).

Please send this message on to anyone you can think of: A Global call for action to save the people of East Timor. Act now to save the people of East Timor before it is too late.

--Protest at Indonesian Diplomatic and Trade Missions--Lobby your Parliaments Today--Involve unions, community groups, religious institutions, co-ops, members of local governments, the media, military leaders--Everyone and anyone you can think of

On August 30, the people of East Timor voted overwhelmingly for independence. Now, they face massacre and starvation. The Indonesian military, police and their militias are engaged in an open and systematic campaign of genocide against the East Timorese people. Hundreds, maybe thousands have been killed already. Hundreds of thousands have fled to the mountains. Thousands are being forcibly deported at gunpoint by the Indonesian military to West Timor. Hundreds of thousands face death by starvation, dehydration, and disease. The Indonesian military is the source of the violence, not the solution. More troops and martial law will only make things worse.

- 1) Demand that Indonesia withdraw its troops from East Timor, so they can be replaced by an international peacekeeping force.
- 2) Demand that Indonesia honor its pledge to respect the overwhelming result of the August 30 vote for independence and stopped the killings and the deportations.
- 3) Pressure your own governments to: a) Support and participate in an international peacekeeping force for East Timor; b) End all military cooperation with Indonesia by halting weapons sales and training.

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4) Block international loans and grants to Indonesia through the World Bank, IMF and other international financial institutions

IBPP Commentary. Political psychologists should continue to consult, carry out, and apply research bearing on how to best communicate political phenomena and their consequences to elicit or impede support. For example, there are population segments that would ignore, support, or reject the above political communication. Communicators might choose which segments are of most import in terms of affecting political phenomena in a desired direction. Perhaps, even human rights and peace activists need to ponder the lessons of propaganda research--as in propagating the faith--for helpful suggestions. (Keywords: East Timor, IPPN.)