

EAST TIMOR UPDATE

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In December 1975, just ten days after declaring its independence from Portugal, the tiny southeast Asian country of East Timor was invaded by its neighbour Indonesia. In the decade-and-a-half since, 250,000 people — over a third of the indigenous Timorese population — have been killed. Genocide and massive human rights violations — everything from rape to indiscriminate killings to forced abortions — go on to this day. But so does the struggle for freedom of the East Timorese people. It is largely the support of countries like Canada that allows Indonesia to maintain its occupation.

East Timor Update is a monthly news service edited in Toronto by the East Timor Alert Network. Reprinting is encouraged, but please credit *East Timor Update*. Contact the Network for more information:

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Fear of reprisals after MP mission

"Our situation has worsened in the past few weeks," writes East Timor's Bishop, Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo in a letter recently received by a Portuguese bishop. "As the visit of the Portuguese parliamentary delegation nears, the [Indonesians] have once again started a campaign of terror, of threats. Anyone who approaches the Portuguese will be killed. There is no climate of freedom...."

Belo's voice is just one of those raised in appeal to the world to watch East Timor during — and especially after — the planned visit of 13 Portuguese members of parliament to their former Timor colony. The visit has been planned under United Nations auspices for early November, but may be delayed further.

The East Timor Alert Network joined other solidarity organizations from Japan, Australia, France, Portugal, the Netherlands and England in an appeal issued on October 14 for non-government organizations to remain watchful through the MPs' visit and afterwards. The ten solidarity groups, "while anxiously hoping for the visit to take place, are apprehensive about a wave of repression that will occur afterwards," the appeal said.

Since August:

- additional contingents of troops from Indonesia have been stationed in all parts of East Timor, often in civilian dress;
- meetings have been held by the military to intimidate the population and force them to demonstrate for integration with Indonesia and display Indonesian flags during the visit;
- Timorese para-military units have been formed for intimidation and to punish dissidents, in order to spread fear among the population;
- other groups have been preparing to provoke confrontation and confusion during the visit;
- there have been more detentions and "disappearances";
- students and Timorese government officials thought to sympathize with the resistance have been sent away from East Timor, in order to defuse opposition.

Both Bishop Belo and resistance leader Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão have called for a UN peacekeeping force to be stationed in East Timor during the visit and for several months after. Xanana has repeatedly called for a cease-fire and peace talks without preconditions, under the auspices of the UN.

The call for peacekeeping forces has been echoed by exiled leaders of three Timorese splinter parties who in 1975 called on Indonesia to annex East Timor. The leaders of Apodeti, KOTA and Trabalhista said that NATO should provide the troops if the UN



Minister Ali Alau in New York campaigning for the post of UN secretary general, first tried to have two Portuguese journalists removed, then withdrew his objections to all but one Australian freelance, Jill Jolliffe. Jolliffe, author of two books on East Timor whose articles have appeared in papers around the world, including the *Globe and Mail*, "not a journalist any more but a crusader for Fretilin [the major party in the Timorese resistance]," Alau said. Part of the animosity Indonesia officials feel for Jolliffe stems from his

refused, since Portugal is a NATO member.

The East Timor solidarity groups fear that guarantees in the agreement that allows the MPs' visit are insufficient, "in particular with regard to security, total liberty of movement and contacts, and safeguards that no reprisals will be taken against the population in the wake of the visit... these principles are already being violated."

Nineteen Catholic bishops from around the world also called for measures to safeguard the Timorese people from reprisals in connection with the MPs' visit. The bishops wrote to UN secretary general Javier Perez de Cuellar "to express our grave concern for the safety of the people of East Timor" and suggest steps that could be taken to enforce Indonesia's promise not to punish any Timorese for speaking to the MPs.

The mission is to be led by Angelo Correia of Portugal's governing Social Democratic Party, who served in the Portuguese army in East Timor from 1969 to 1971 and speaks Tetun, the most widespread indigenous Timorese language. Representatives of the Socialist, Communist, Christian Democratic and Green parties are also among the delegation.

Doubts about the mission resurfaced when the Indonesian-appointed Governor of East Timor, Mario Viegas Carrascalão, said the MPs would be allowed to speak only to Indonesian government officials — a direct violation of the visit agreement. "The Portuguese should be objective," Carrascalão said. "When they have arrived here, they should not talk to any East Timorese anywhere at their own will.... None of the delegation will be allowed to leave the group and talk to people."

Another hitch, one that may derail the long-awaited MPs' visit altogether, is Indonesian insistence on a veto over all journalists invited along. Indonesian Foreign

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key role in spreading the truth about five Australian journalists who were killed by invading Indonesian troops at Balibó, East Timor, in 1975.

According to the terms of reference agreed to at the UN, each side would "communicate" a list of journalists to the other. There is no provision for Indonesia to block any names.

Preparations for the visit have been suspended pending settlement of the dispute over Jolliffe, with Portugal vowing not to back down.

Senate supports Timor

The U.S. Senate in September joined the House of Representatives in passing a Sense of the Congress resolution that called on President George Bush to reverse his support for Indonesia's occupation of East Timor. "The President should urge the government of Indonesia to take action to end all forms of human rights violations in East Timor and to permit full freedom of expression in East Timor" and allow free access to international human rights and relief organizations, the motion said. It marks the first time the U.S. Congress has taken a stand on the Timor question.

Ramos Horta back

Former Fretilin representative to the United Nations, José Ramos Horta, has been appointed external representative for CNRM (the armed resistance in East Timor). Resistance leader Xanana Gusmão says he "is mandated to represent the CNRM in all matters in the field of diplomacy." Ramos Horta is author of *FUNU: The Unfinished Saga of East Timor* (available from ETAN).