



EAST TIMOR UPDATE

ber 22 — May 10, 1993

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 every 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 newsletter edited in Toronto by the East Timor Alert Network. Reprinting is encouraged, but please credit *East Timor Update*. Contact the editor for more information:

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Xanana denied right to fair trial

The trial of East Timorese resistance leader Xanana Gusmão has been revealed as a kangaroo court, according to supporters of East Timor's fight for independence. Xanana, who was arrested by Indonesian armed forces in Dili, East Timor, last November, is being tried on charges of rebellion and possession of firearms by an Indonesian court.

On May 5, the court rejected Xanana's right to deliver his defence plea in Portuguese, instead insisting he speak Bahasa Indonesian — a language that he, as an East Timorese, has little knowledge of. Xanana's supporters in East Timor and the international solidarity movement said the court ruling was proof that the Indonesian government has no intention of allowing a fair trial in keeping with international standards. One witness, Saturnino da Costa Belo, has already suffered for speaking out in the courtroom for East Timorese independence.

Xanana rejected the court's jurisdiction after it refused to hear his speech in the language of his choice, saying "I am not an Indonesian citizen."

The prosecution is demanding life imprisonment for Xanana, who has headed the armed resistance since the early 1980s. Indonesian Attorney-General Singgih has stated openly that the courts might even impose the death penalty.

The East Timor Alert Network is joining with solidarity groups from around the world in calling for an end to the show trial of Xanana Gusmão, and calls the government of Canada to ensure that no reprisals are taken against Xanana or his family. Appeals can be sent to External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougall (postage free) at house of Commons, Ottawa Ont., K1A 0A6. Please send copies to Ray Funk MP of Parliamentarians for East Timor. (Hundreds of letters were sent in McDougall's office in response to an ETAN appeal last fall — we believe these letters had a big impact, encouraging External Affairs to send an observer to the trial and raise Xanana's case at the UN Commission on Human Rights this year.)

Red Cross v. the generals

Indonesia has dissolved its special military command for East Timor, but promoted the command's chief to lead the armed forces throughout the region. Brig-Gen. Theo Syafei remains at the head of dozen battalions of soldiers in East Timor. This month, he signaled a continuation of his hard line by calling for the International Committee of the Red Cross to be expelled from East Timor. The ICRC office in Dili has performed invaluable services to Timorese civilians since it was allowed to open in the 1980s.

On a visit to Indonesia, ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga vowed to keep the office open, adding "We are not particularly satisfied as to the rhythm of access to the detainees (and) persons



Photo: Glenn Wheeler

arrested in East Timor, but I see for the future a better situation."

Timorese ambassadors visit Ottawa

A North American tour by a group of young East Timorese exiles wound up this month with organizers calling it a great success. The group visited more than 20 cities in the United States and Canada, meeting with concerned citizens, journalists and government officials.

In Ottawa, Constancio Pinto and Abé Barreto Soares met with the Liberal and New Democrat international affairs caucuses, the Canadian Labour Congress, and the Indonesia Desks of External Affairs and the Canadian International Development Agency — which lists Indonesia among its top aid recipients (at over \$40 million annually). At a Parliament Hill news conference, they were joined by three MPs from the all-party Parliamentarians for East Timor: Liberal David Kilgour and New Democrats Svend Robinson and Dan Heap. The pair also spoke at public forums in Ottawa, Montreal, and Vancouver. In Toronto, they spoke in Portuguese at the Casa do Alentejo and (along with Dan Heap) at Harbourfront Centre.

During the tour, Pinto's wife Gabriela Lopes da Cruz Pinto, was arrested by the Indonesian army in East Timor. She was interrogated at the Colmera military headquarters and released, but told to return to the Army that evening. Since then, she has been interrogated several times about Constancio's whereabouts and ordered to report daily for further questioning. "This is severe harassment, intended to pressure her husband to stop his activities on behalf of East Timorese self-determination," said the New York-based East Timor Action Network/U.S.

(Pinto was one of the key organizers of the November 12, 1991, demonstration that ended in a bloodbath when Indonesian soldiers opened fire on a peaceful crowd, killing over 250 people. He escaped from Indonesia after several

months in hiding, but his family has not been allowed to join him in Portugal.)

Indonesia stalls UN

The United Nations-sponsored peace talks process continues to drag on with little result. In April, the Indonesian and Portuguese foreign ministers met in Rome along with UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and agreed only to meet again in September. Timorese representatives holding a parallel meeting said Indonesia's Ali Alatas was stonewalling UN efforts to bring about a peaceful solution.

Meanwhile, Boutros-Ghali sent special envoy Amos Wako on a fact-finding mission to East Timor. Wako visited East Timor in 1992 and issued a report described as extremely critical of Indonesian rule. However, the report has not been made public, despite a resolution from the UN Human Rights Commission that it be released. Observers believe Wako's latest report is equally damaging to Indonesia, but it too remains a secret document.

Network news

- At its founding meeting in Ottawa, the Portuguese Canadian National Congress gave its unanimous support to East Timor's right to self-determination. The Congress' first resolution was one in support of East Timor.

- ETAN/Windsor-Essex County is working on a book of East Timorese poetry as a fundraising project for the East Timorese cultural school in Darwin, Australia.

- ETAN/Toronto is planning a protest against Bata Shoes' investments in Indonesia for June 26 — supporters are being asked to donate old shoes for this event (Call (416) 531-5850 for details).

- East Timorese folk singer Agio Pereira will be a featured performer at the Vancouver and Winnipeg Folk Festivals this July — stay tuned for more information.

