

# The tragedy of East Timor

Human rights groups including Amnesty International report over 200,000 deaths in East Timor since its 1975 invasion by Indonesia — over one third of the population. The genocide in East Timor continues to this day.



Canada is an important member of a coalition of western governments that have been supporting the Indonesian dictatorship. Indonesia could not continue its genocidal war against the East Timorese without the diplomatic, economic and military support of western governments.

**"We are dying as a people and as a nation."  
— Carlos Ximenes Belo, Bishop of East Timor,  
1996 Nobel Prize co-winner**



## The hidden genocide



• East Timor, a small island nation located 650 km northwest of Australia, is home to a culturally and linguistically diverse indigenous population. For centuries the Timorese maintained their sustainable, satisfying cultures, largely untouched by Western influences.

• In December 1975, just nine days after declaring its independence from Portugal, East Timor was invaded by the armed forces of neighbouring Indonesia. **An estimated 100,000 Timorese were slaughtered within six weeks.**

• Since the invasion, human rights groups and UN agencies have documented massive human rights violations, including **rape, forced abortions and sterilizations, mass executions, torture and the napalm-bombing of whole villages.**

• By the 1980s, the death toll had reached more than 200,000. Indonesian military authorities concealed the genocide by closing the territory to foreign journalists until 1990.

• On Nov. 12, 1991, the mask slipped when **Indonesian troops massacred over 250 unarmed mourners** in Dili, capital of East Timor. Crucially, *a British camera man escaped with footage of the Dili massacre.* More massacres have been reported since then.

• Today, the occupation and genocide continue, all justified by the Indonesian regime in the name of "development."

**"The situation in East Timor is the most obscene abandonment of world moral order since the Holocaust."**

— Prof. Noam Chomsky, US foreign policy critic and dissident intellectual

## Canada's complicity

• **Canada has been one of Indonesia's most loyal supporters** since the invasion of East Timor. At the United Nations, our government abstained from the original resolution condemning the invasion of East Timor and has voted on Indonesia's side since 1980. Canadian representatives have actively lobbied to have the issue removed from the UN agenda.

• Successive Canadian governments — from Trudeau through Mulroney to Chrétien — have sacrificed human rights for greater trade ties.

**When the current government took office in 1993, Canadian investments in Indonesia stood at \$3 billion; they have now reached \$9 billion.** Indonesia is Canada's largest export market in Southeast Asia, and is consistently among the top recipients of Canadian aid.

• **In 1994, Canada resumed the sale of military equipment to Indonesia, which had ceased two years earlier. In 1995, although no actual sales were made, Canada issued permits for \$362 million in arms exports.**

• The current government's silence on East Timor is all the more hypocritical considering the promises of Jean Chrétien and Lloyd Axworthy before the last election. "I fully support (the) strong condemnation of the Canadian government's policy towards Indonesia," Axworthy said in 1993. **In 1992, Chrétien promised to support UN resolutions on East Timor if elected.** Instead, the federal and BC governments have preferred high-profile "Team Canada" trade jaunts, including one to Indonesia in January 1996.

**"These ill-bred people have to be shot. In the end, they had to be shot ... The army is determined to crush anyone who disrupts stability."**

— General Try Sutrisno, Commander of the Indonesian Armed Forces during the Dili massacre, now Vice-President of Indonesia



# What you can do

There are many ways you can help the East Timorese. Here are a few basic ideas:

- **Write letters** to the following Liberal cabinet ministers and your own member of parliament. Ask why Canada continues to support the genocide in East Timor, and ask that Canada impose a military embargo on Indonesia and link trade to human rights. You can also ask your local MP to join Parliamentarians for East Timor. Letters to all ministers and MPs can be sent postage free to: House of Commons, Ottawa Ont., K1A 0A6.

- Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister
- Lloyd Axworthy, Minister for Foreign Affairs
- Raymond Chan, Secretary of State (Asia Pacific)
- Art Eggleton, Minister for International Trade
- Don Boudria, Minister for International Cooperation

You can fax Mr. Chrétien at (613) 941-6900 or Mr. Axworthy at (613) 996-3443. Mr. Chan can be phoned locally at (604) 664-9295 (fax 664-9297).

- **Write Premier** Glen Clark with the same concerns. BC governments have consistently downplayed human rights while promoting trade. Write: Room 156, Parliament Buildings, Victoria BC, V8V 1X4 (phone 604-387-0087, fax 604-387-1715).

- **Call the** local Indonesian Consulate to register your protest at (604) 682-8855 (fax 662-8396).

- **Raise awareness** among your friends, colleagues and groups about East Timor. The East Timor Alert Network can provide more information or a guest speaker on request.

To find out more about East Timor, Indonesia or Canada's role in the tragedy, or to get involved, please contact the East Timor Alert Network/Vancouver. ETAN is part of an international grassroots network dedicated to increasing public awareness and changing government policy. In cooperation with human rights groups, churches, trade unions, and women's groups, ETAN organizes events and publishes materials across Canada. ETAN/Vancouver, PO Box 33733, Stn. D, Vancouver BC, V6J 4L6. Phone (604) 261-7930, Fax (604) 325-0086, E-mail [etanvan@web.net](mailto:etanvan@web.net)