



EAST TIMOR UPDATE

Number 20 — February 27, 1993

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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UN commission considers East Timor resolution

East Timor was on the agenda as the United Nations Commission on Human Rights opened its 49th session in Geneva. The Commission was scheduled to vote on an East Timor resolution on March 9. Indonesia managed to get itself elected vice-president of this year's session, but solidarity groups vowed to push for a strong resolution regardless. Last year, Indonesia agreed to a consensus declaration at the Human Rights Commission that called for improved human rights in East Timor and access to be granted for international human rights groups.

Neither condition has been met. Amnesty International was prevented from visiting East Timor, most recently when a representative was banned from the trial of East Timor resistance leader Xanana Gusmão which opened on Feb. 1.

Canadian Ambassador Anne Park, who this year chairs the Western group of countries, has not yet indicated whether Canada will support a resolution on East Timor. Last year, the Canadian delegation was a key mover in a successful bid to water down a draft resolution from the European Community.

However, American Ambassador Richard Schifter has promised to seek a joint text this year with other democracies on China's actions in Tibet and Indonesia's crackdown on East Timor, a major break with past US policy.

The East Timor Alert Network is appealing for messages to be sent before March 9 to the department of external affairs, asking for the government of Canada to:

- (1) back any resolution supported by the Timorese delegation at the UN Commission on Human Rights
- (2) support a call for the UN Commission on Human Rights to mandate a special rapporteur on the situation in East Timor
- (3) call on Indonesia to live up to the terms of last year's consensus declaration by taking concrete steps to end repression in East Timor and allowing free access to international humanitarian organizations, including Amnesty International.

Appeals can be sent to External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougall, House of Commons, Ottawa Ont. K1A 0A6, Fax (613) 996-3443.

Bishop: thousands arrested, tortured

According to new reports from the Timorese resistance movement CNRM, 4,000 East Timorese may have been called in for interrogation by the Indonesian forces of occupation since the capture of CNRM leader Xanana Gusmão. The detainees are reported to have been submitted to torture and humiliation during interrogation.

These reports are confirmed by Carlos Ximenes Belo, Catholic Bishop of East Timor, who said the persecution of Timor's Christians and of those who did not recognize Timor as part of Indonesia had worsened since Xanana's arrest.

Speaking to Portugal's Catholic Radio Renascença, Belo explained "When the people are taken to prison, the first thing they do is beat them up. I have received letters from prisoners ... telling me about all types of torture, electric shocks, burning of genitals with cigarettes, placing people in barrels of cold water and whipping, until they say they are FRETILIN collaborators".

He said those arrested were also forced to confess that Catholic bishops and priests organized demonstrations and were against

attacks by the Indonesian army illegally occupying the country.

Xanana verdict in March

The Indonesian court trying Timorese resistance leader Xanana Gusmão has announced a plan to hand down its verdict on March 20. In a timetable that makes little allowance for a defence to be mounted, the court plans to hear prosecution and defence arguments on March 12



Indonesia.

"People are afraid to walk freely," Bishop Belo added. "Everywhere there are military from the territorial operation. They are building houses and going to live in villages. The people do not feel free."

Reports are also coming through that Timorese are being forced to take part in ceremonies where they have to swear allegiance before the Indonesian flag, loyalty to Suharto and their acceptance of the principles of Pancasila, the Indonesian State ideology.

Belo also told reporters that suspected dissidents are being forced to take part in crude parodies of traditional Timorese ceremonies. People are gathered together in groups of up to 200 and forced to drink the blood of an animal and take an oath of allegiance to Indonesia. He said the oath is an untrue version of a traditional pact taken by Timorese leaders to end tribal wars. Rival leaders would mix their blood with palm wine and drink it in an oath to mark the end of hostilities.

Despite reports in the Indonesian media, no guerrillas have surrendered to the Indonesians since the capture of Xanana Gusmão. In fact the opposite is true: FALINTIL, the armed wing of the resistance, have been carrying out frequent

and 13 and deliver its verdict a week later. Xanana is charged with "rebellion" and possession of firearms — charges that carry a possible death penalty, but more likely a long jail term. The United States and Australia have sent observers to the trial.

One Timorese youth told Australia's *Mate-bian News*: "We in East Timor don't believe a word of what the Indonesian military are trying to force Xanana to say. You out there, all you can do to help is to fight for Xanana to regain a breathing space; and, when he is free like you out there, you then can criticize what he does or says..."

Timorese can't travel

East Timorese youths will no longer be allowed to travel outside Indonesia, under a new policy brought in to stop a rash of defections. Tri Swartanta, chief Indonesian sports and youth official for East Timor, said more defections "would bring a bad image to the country."

In 1991, four East Timorese soccer players defected from an Indonesian-sponsored team visiting Darwin, Australia and sought political asylum through the Portuguese embassy in Canberra.

Two more East Timorese youths defected to Canada in 1992 during a student exchange program, Swartanta said.