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Q & A: East Timor's Peace Proposals

Indonesia's rule in East Timor, a former Portuguese colony annexed by Jakarta after Indonesian forces invaded 20 years ago, continues to face challenges. José Ramos Horta, the special representative of a council that links East Timorese groups opposed to Indonesian control, discussed the situation with Michael Richardson of the International Herald Tribune.

Q: The United Nations Commission on Human Rights is due to resume its annual debate in Geneva on Wednesday on human rights violations in East Timor and other places. Can such debate influence Indonesia's East Timor policy?

A: It does because Indonesia aspires to regional and world leadership. It is a member of the commission and one of the nonpermanent members of the UN Security Council. It chairs the Non-aligned Movement. So it has enormous credibility at stake. It cannot defy international opinion in the same way as the military regime in Burma or the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.

The UN has never recognized Indonesia's armed takeover of East Timor in 1975 and its formal annexation of the territory in 1976. Instead, the UN, through various resolutions, has demanded that Indonesia withdraw from East Timor so that an act of self-determination under UN supervision can take place.

Q: In recent days, there have been

attacks by hooded so-called Ninja gangs against people in the East Timorese capital, Dili. The Indonesian military has alleged that the gangs are controlled by pro-independence groups. Who do you think is behind the gangs and why?

A: The attacks were instigated by the Indonesian military to create a climate of violence between Timorese so that the blame would not be placed on Indonesia. The fact is that those gangs of Timorese and Indonesian thugs are trained and paid by the security forces.

Q: What should Indonesia do to solve the East Timor problem?

A: We have offered Jakarta an honorable way out through a three-phase peace plan.

In the first phase, lasting for about two years, Indonesia must withdraw all its troops from East Timor, release all prisoners and allow the UN to establish a human-rights monitoring presence.

In the second phase, East Timor would get full autonomy with a local assembly chosen in elections organized by the UN. This phase would last for five years and could be extended for another five years. It would give Indonesia ample time to prove to the people of East Timor that its behavior had changed.

The status of the territory would only be decided at the end of the autonomy period. That would provide Indonesia and ourselves sufficient time to find a

modus vivendi in which Indonesian interests would be protected.

However, the end result of the whole process would have to be a self-determination referendum under UN supervision.

Q: What is Indonesia's response to this proposal?

A: So far, outright rejection. But I know that there is growing sympathy within Indonesia for this kind of approach. There is also increasing support in the UN and from the U.S. and European Union.

Q: If Indonesia continues to reject the peace plan you have put forward, what strategy will your group pursue to get Jakarta to become more flexible?

A: We will continue to extend an olive branch to Indonesia. At the same time, we will pursue aggressively our international campaign to increase the costs to Indonesia. In East Timor itself, our people are determined to escalate their actions to make Indonesia's occupation of the territory more costly.

Q: Wouldn't that amount to terrorism?

A: No, we are talking about civil disobedience and street demonstrations. However, armed resistance by our guerrillas will continue against the Indonesian military occupation. But Indonesian civilians and their property will not be targeted.

February 22, 1995

Concern expressed over East Timor deaths

(Dili - CNS) Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, Apostolic Administrator of Dili, has written Indonesian President Suharto to advise him of increased human rights violations in East Timor since December. Speaking to UCA News, an Asian Church news agency based in Thailand, Bishop Belo said that he decided to write President Suharto to express grave concern over a series of civilian deaths.

Bishop Belo expressed concern over various incidents, including civilians killed by security forces and the terrorism tactics of a marauding gang dubbed "the Ninjas", because they strike at night and cover their heads with masks.

If the Indonesian president does not respond to his call for human rights guarantees, Bishop Belo said, "I will report [these cases] to the United Nations Secretary-General and ask international communities to look into the suffering of East Timor people". Security officers killed six

people on 12 January in Liquisia district.

Authorities claimed that the dead were Fretilin (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) guerrillas, but local people said they were civilians. Suharto instructed armed forces commander Gen. Feisal Tanjung to investigate the Liquisia incident immediately. State Secretariat Minister Moerdiono told reporters on 12 February. Moerdiono said Tanjung told the president that security officers violated "established procedures" in the 12 January killings. Suharto called for further investigations and ordered the soldiers detained, Moerdiono said. On 9 January, a so-called "Ninja" hit-squad abducted five Dili youths. The youths' bodies were found in the western outskirts of Dili the next day.

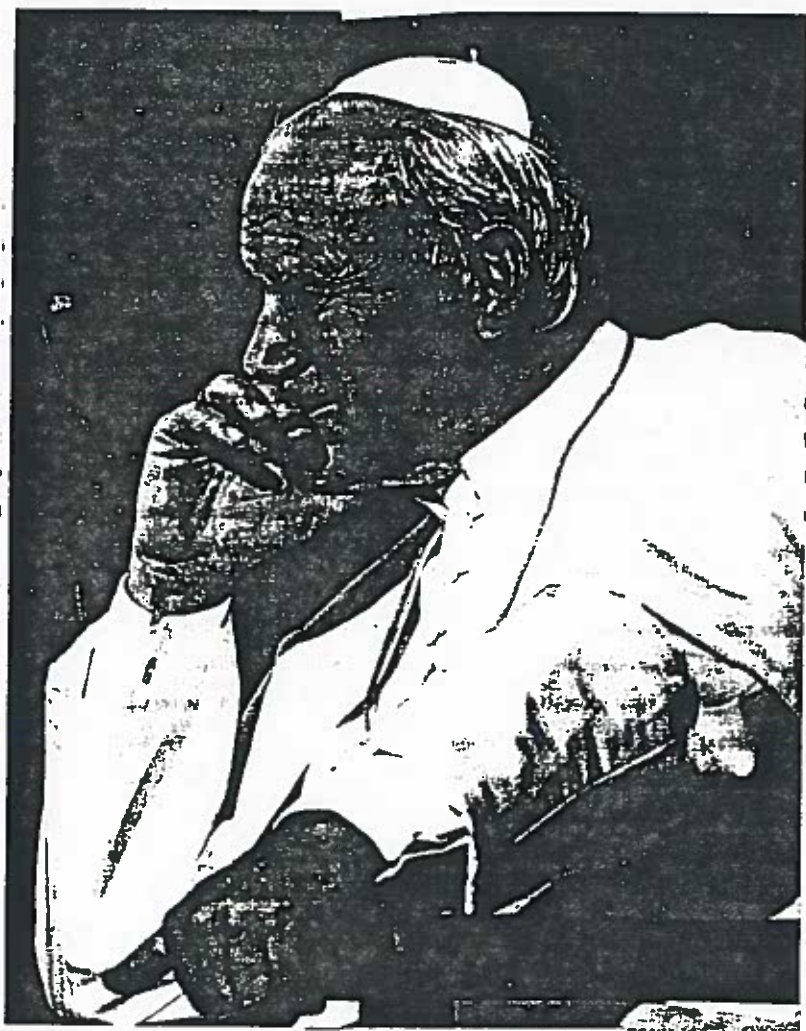
Dili residents have organized self-enforced neighbourhood curfews to protect their communities from "Ninjas", who roam the streets at night stoning houses and assaulting people.

Fr Mateos da Rosario da Cruz, head of the Diocese of Dili's Justice and Peace Commission, told UCA News on 12 February that since the 12 January incident in Dili large numbers of women gather outside Bishop Belo's residence almost daily. Fr Rosario said the women complain about continual unrest in their neighborhoods caused by the "Ninja" gang. People also crowd his office eager to report incidents, Fr Rosario said. A boy with a large cut on his head had just reported to the priest that masked men broke into his house at dawn and beat him until he was bloody.

Fr Rosario said the Justice and Peace Commission will hold a meeting to discuss the situation. The diocesan commission, formed in August 1994 and formally welcomed by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in October, is advising Bishop Belo on the situation, Fr Rosario added.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

✧ THE BIOGRAPHY ✧



TAD SZULC

fectly consistent with his and the Church's broader activism in human rights issues worldwide.

With a few lapses, the Church under John Paul II has an impressive record on human rights, and the pope's voice has the greatest moral authority in this realm (in which, indeed, there are very few authoritative voices). And he has used his global travel to preach the human rights message.

Starting an African trip in April 1989, John Paul II told his audience in Tananarive, Madagascar, that he could not visit South Africa because "even if the pope shows due respect to the local authorities of one government or another, he must be respected in his functions as someone who says the truth—the truth in faith and the truth in moral order and in social and political spheres. Socio-politically speaking, we all know very well what the moral problems are in this sphere in South Africa."

In October 1989 John Paul II went to pray on a field in Dili in East Timor where Indonesian troops had killed as many as two hundred thousand East Timorese when Indonesia annexed that former Portuguese colony in 1974. East Timor is a Roman Catholic enclave in Muslim Indonesia, but the pope did not dwell on religious differences when he told his listeners that "for many years now, you have experienced destruction and death as a result of conflict. You have known what it means to be victims of hatred and struggle. Many innocent people have died while others have been prey to retaliation and revenge."

John Paul II was the first world leader to visit East Timor after its occupation by Indonesia fifteen years earlier, and he has retained active interest in its fate.

President Clinton became aware of the East Timor problems when he visited the Indonesian capital of Jakarta in November 1994 and found demonstrators holed up in protest on the grounds of the American embassy. Clinton, however, had nothing to say about East Timor even though according to the province's Roman Catholic bishop, Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo, thousands more people had been killed after the annexation. Bishop Belo said that "after interrogation, people were tortured and beaten and condemned without a just and formal trial."

The Boston Globe

MONDAY, APRIL 3, 1995

Compromising human rights

The most generous way to describe the Clinton administration's approach to human rights is to call it ambivalent.

John Shattuck, assistant secretary of state for human rights, has said all the right things and produced candid reports on human rights around the world. But President Clinton ignored Beijing's abuses for the sake of trade, subordinated human rights to strategic concerns when Boris Yeltsin assaulted Chechnya and made the fatal mistake of refusing to classify the mass murders in Rwanda as genocide when to do so might have enabled UN forces to stop the slaughter.

Recently there has been an unusually overt demonstration of the administration's ambivalence on human rights. Speaking in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. William Owens, said the Pentagon wants to resume a US program for the military and educational training of the Indonesian army, a program that Congress suspended in 1992 because of Indonesia's flagrant abuse of human rights on the conquered territory of East Timor.

The same day, Shattuck was telling Congress that the human rights situation on East Timor, "which began worsening in late 1994, worsened further in January this year." Shattuck's testimony replicated a report by the organization Human Rights Watch/Asia on "Deteriorating Human Rights in East Timor." The report describes "extrajudicial executions, torture, disappearances, unlawful arrests and detentions and denials of freedom of association, assembly and expression."

As Clinton and the new Congress consider the Pentagon's request for \$600,000 to spend on the training of Indonesian officers, they ought to heed the counsel of the US Catholic Conference. "As difficult as the situation in East Timor has been over the years," the bishops' office noted, "congressional protests and representations by various US administrations have helped limit the severity of human rights abuses, keeping a bad situation from becoming much worse."

This is no time to encourage Indonesian persecution of the East Timorese.

FINANCIAL TIMES

WEDNESDAY MARCH 29 1995



East Timor
Where terror
still rules

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Violence and terror continue to plague East Timor, the former Portuguese colony occupied by Indonesia in 1975. Indonesian soldiers are accused of cold-bloodedly murdering East Timorese in rural areas.

Some 20 years after Indonesia invaded the territory, anti-Indonesian sentiment in East Timor shows no sign of subsiding and its occupation of the territory remains an international embarrassment for it.

Made up of hundreds of ethnic groupings and as many as 17,000 islands, Indonesia is sensitive to anything which might disturb the fabric of its national unity.

With every attempt Indonesia makes to be taken seriously in the international community - suggestions of mediating between Bosnians and Serbs, or attempts to take on a bigger role in the UN Security Council - Indonesians are invariably confronted with their presence in East Timor. In November, a demonstration by 29 East Timorese in the US embassy grounds in Jakarta in front of most of the world's press took the gloss off the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation summit attended by 17 regional leaders, including US president Bill Clinton.

The issue continues to overshadow Indonesia's increasingly important economic status. With 190m people, it is the world's fourth most populated country and among the fastest growing economies in south-east Asia.

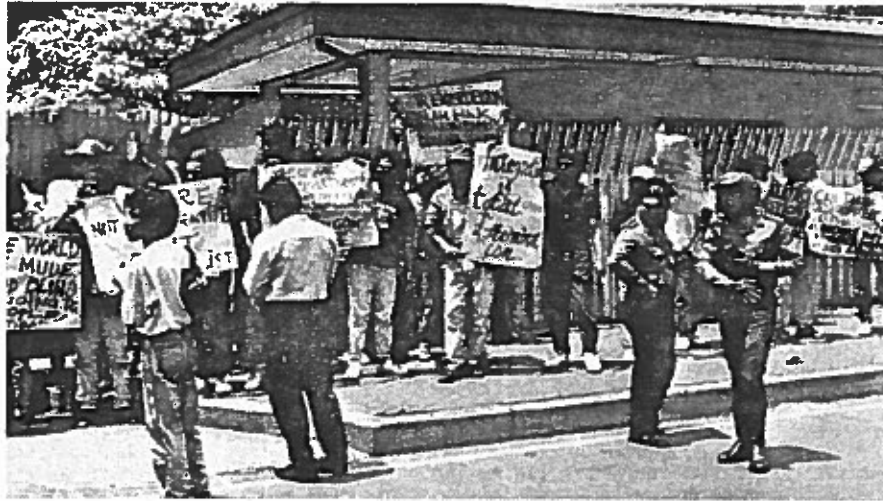
Yet the Indonesians are reluctant to change their policy in the territory despite international criticism of their role there. Talks are taking place under United Nations auspices. Exiled members of East Timor's independence movement and East Timorese who favour integration with Indonesia are to meet in Austria in April, an initiative by Mr Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the UN secretary general.

In May, Mr Ali Alatas, Indonesia's foreign minister, will engage in the sixth round of talks with his Portuguese counterpart in New York. Portugal, which abruptly abandoned East Timor in 1975, so leaving the territory to warring factions, still claims sovereignty over the area. Indonesia declared the region its 27th province in 1976 but the UN has never recognised Jakarta's sovereignty over the region.

Indonesian officials point out that East Timor receives more government development funds than any other region.

Persistent thorn in the flesh

Indonesia is paying a high diplomatic price for its occupation of East Timor, says Manuela Saragosa



Jakarta protest: demonstrations by East Timorese have embarrassed the Indonesian government

Certainly, in contrast to when the territory was a Portuguese colony, it now has roads, schools, a university, bridges, health clinics, telecommunications and electricity.

But unemployment in East Timor is, by the Indonesian government's own admission, high. School-leavers experience difficulty in finding jobs. The Batara Indra group, an Indonesian business conglomerate close to the military, holds a virtual monopoly on everything that makes money in East Timor, including coffee trading, sandalwood production and marble mining. Entrepreneurs are rare and private investment into the region is minimal.

Trading in the territory is largely controlled by ethnic Bugis from the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, who make up the majority of immigrants to East Timor.

East Timor has all the characteristics of an occupied territory, according to diplomats who have travelled in the region and who are the only source of independent information on it. They comment that the region is run as a military fiefdom: the Indonesian army has a large presence in East Timor, and has been shocking in its callousness in dealing

with the local population.

The UN special rapporteur's recent report on East Timor, following his visit to the territory in July last year, noted that there were "patterns of dealing violently with political dissent and [a] virtual impunity enjoyed by members of the security forces responsible for human rights violations".

Military officials claim their large presence in East Timor is

Indonesia has opposed an independently-observed referendum

needed to facilitate the development and integration of the region. But as one diplomat comments: "The army's behaviour has been such that it has not implemented a policy of integration as continuously as it has applied a policy of occupation."

In one incident, two officers in the Indonesian army, which is predominantly Moslem, were convicted by a military court of desecrating the sacrament in a church in predominantly Catholic East Timor. Actions of this kind breed the hatred

and suspicion with which many East Timorese regard the Indonesians. The ubiquitous presence of plain-clothed intelligence officers has fostered an atmosphere of distrust among the East Timorese. More recently, Indonesian soldiers shot dead six unarmed civilians in the Liquica regency, a district in East Timor, after opening fire at close range.

Jakarta officials appeared genuinely shocked when details of the Liquica incident surfaced last month. Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights investigated the killings and concluded that there had been a gross violation of human rights. The last time such an investigation was conducted was after the 1991 massacre in Dili, the capital, when, according to UN estimates, between 150 and 270 independence demonstrators were killed by Indonesian soldiers.

The army has admitted there was a "violation of procedures" and the Military Honour Council is expected to punish the soldiers involved. But, as in the Dili massacre, the soldiers will be tried in a military court rather than a civilian one. The UN rapporteur noted that the sentences meted out after

the Dili massacre were "inappropriately light".

Meanwhile, in all of the UN-sponsored meetings with Portuguese officials and anti-integrationists, Indonesia has categorically refused to discuss East Timor's political status. But as one diplomat comments: "Unless there is a political solution to East Timor, there can be no solution."

Indonesia is unhappy about the UN secretary general's initiative to invite individual pro- and anti-integrationists to discuss East Timor in Salzburg next month. Mr Irawan Abidin, Indonesia's foreign ministry spokesman, says "the UN has been going a little too far" in interpreting its mandate to "assist in the establishment of an atmosphere conducive to the achievement of a solution to the question of East Timor".

Yet it remains unclear how Indonesia intends to resolve the East Timor question. After the embarrassment suffered at the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation summit, President Suharto ruled out any talk of autonomy or special status for East Timor.

Indonesia has also opposed an independently-observed referendum in the territory, even though it claims that most East Timorese favour integration. Their argument is a referendum was held in 1975, but the UN has not recognised its validity. Continuing violence and fighting in the territory indicate that the Indonesians have failed to win over the East Timorese.

Political analysts and diplomats agree that East Timor is unlikely to be granted independence because Indonesia believes it would threaten national unity. Granting independence to East Timor could encourage separatist movements in other parts of the archipelago.

This may explain why talk of autonomy or special status for East Timor has been squashed by the president. The idea of national unity is one of the principles in the state ideology known as *Pancasila* ("Five Principles") - and challenging *Pancasila* in Indonesia is akin to blasphemy.

Given these constraints and taking into account Indonesia's reluctance to discuss East Timor's political status, the options appear limited. But unless the military's presence is drastically reduced and some degree of political and economic control handed to the East Timorese, the territory promises to remain a painful thorn in Indonesia's domestic and foreign policy.

A world apart:
East and Timor
oppressed and
brutalized. East
Timor deserves
our sympathy —
there are
contributed to its
tragedy. Arnold
S. Kohlen writes

Boston Sunday Globe

DECEMBER 10, 1995

Commentary and Analysis

THE PACIFIC

Buried alive: East Timor's tragic oppression

BY ARNOLD S. KOHEN

With the world's attention focused on the Bosnian peace agreement, the 20th anniversary of an invasion that led to even greater carnage than the tragedy in the Balkans passed Thursday with little notice. But the consequences of Indonesia's December 1975 invasion of the former Portuguese colony of East Timor are still with us. The children of those who perished in the first wave of savage repression are at this moment being beaten and tortured.

Over most of the last two decades, East Timor has received only sporadic worldwide attention: in 1991, when Indonesian troops massacred more than 250 people in a church cemetery, an event filmed by British television and broadcast around the world, and again last year, when East Timorese students occupied part of the US Embassy compound in Indonesia during a visit by President Clinton. On Thursday, in recognition of the anniversary of the invasion, pro-independence Timorese occupied part of the Dutch and Russian embassies in Jakarta. But for the most part, the public hears or knows little of what is happening in East Timor.

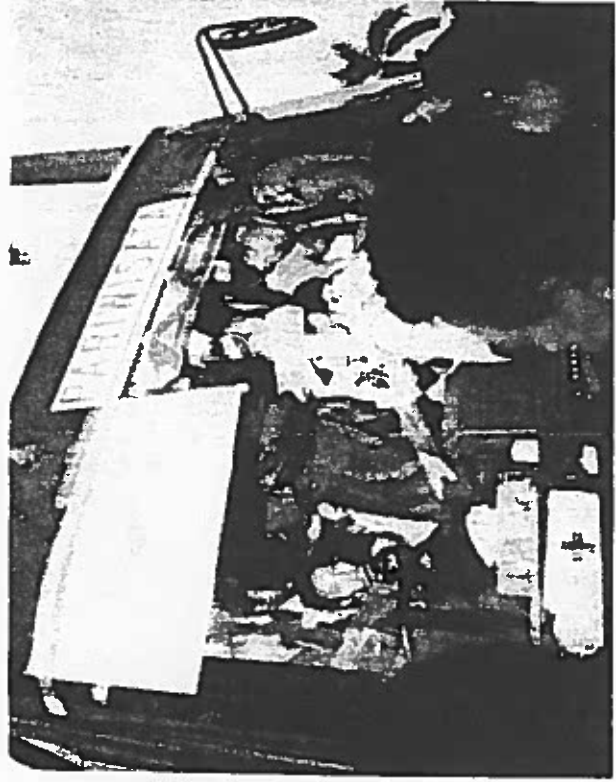
East Timor, an area located off the north coast of Australia, and about the size of Connecticut, deserves the special sympathy of Americans because the United States provided the arms and diplomatic support for that 1975 invasion. President Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger were in Jakarta the day before, and they made no objection to the Indonesian action, though it was illegal under international law and has never been recognized by the United Nations. Longtime efforts in

Congress finally have stimulated pressure to address the tragedy in East Timor.

If the public is troubled about Bosnia, it should also be concerned over East Timor. About 250,000 people from a population of 4 million have perished in Bosnia since 1991, while in East Timor, it is estimated that 200,000 of a population of less than 700,000 died from the combined effects of the Indonesian assault between 1975 and 1979, many in a war-induced famine compared to some of the worst catastrophes in recent history, including starvation in Cambodia under Pol Pot.

"It defies imagination that so many people have perished in such a small place as East Timor," said Mairead Corrigan McGuire, who won the 1976 Nobel Peace Prize for her work in Northern Ireland, where 3,000 people have died in the violence since 1969. East Timor has sparked public concern in Ireland, in part because of the Irish historical experience of occupation by a powerful neighbor.

Today, tension and oppression have a vise-like grip on East Timor: I visited there in September, during some of the most serious upheavals since the Santa Cruz cemetery massacre of 1991. "This place is like a concentration camp," said a priest who



East Timorese youths are taken from the Russian Embassy in Jakarta Friday after they protested Indonesian rule of their homeland.

AP PHOTO

could not be identified.

At a Mass one day at the home of Roman Catholic Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo, himself considered for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995, there was a crippled boy, his face black-and-blue with caked blood from a beating by security forces. Traumatized and barely willing to speak, he said he had been in a police station with 30 other young people who had been stripped naked and similarly assaulted.

"We have been going from prison to prison — I don't know where he is — and the police won't tell us," said one desperate parent searching for his child. He took a considerable risk simply in talking to a foreigner. Nearby, dozens of young people

took refuge in a courtyard, seflved with head wounds inflicted by Indonesian police.

"They're taking everything from us," said one man. "All most Timorese have now is the skin on their bones." Indonesian settlers brought into East Timor are taking the scarce jobs and opportunities. As in Tibet, invaded by the Chinese in 1950, the settlers seem to be there to swamp the East Timorese in their own country.

"It's a slow annihilation," said another priest, who reported that as many as 80 percent of the native East Timorese in some areas suffer from tuberculosis, while Indonesian authorities make it difficult for many people to obtain medicines.

The disparity between the two sides could not be more clear. One is made up of unarmed young people who have little more than ideals to sustain them. The other consists of heavily armed elite units of Indonesian mobile brigade riot police. I saw countless trucks filled with machine-gun toting army troops, both uniformed and in plainclothes, some wearing ski masks in broad daylight in the oppressive tropical heat — an open reminder of those in East Timor who have "disappeared" without a trace. Spies working for Indonesian forces are everywhere.

In a telephone conversation last week, Bishop Belo, a courageous moderate who has worked hard to deter violence in the territory, said the situation remains the

same.

During the past few months, dozens of young East Timorese have entered embassies in Jakarta seeking political asylum. The personal histories of almost all of them tell the story of East Timor today: Many, if not most, have lost parents in the war, and most have been beaten or tortured.

Involvement of the Clinton administration in Bosnia and Northern Ireland has helped smooth the way for peace agreements. There are signs that, over time, the same might work in East Timor. President Clinton, who has raised the issue with Indonesian President Suharto, can increase his support for United Nations peace talks and try to convince the Indonesian government to take concrete steps in pursuit of a peaceful solution. Experts say there is growing recognition in Indonesia that changes must be made if Jakarta is to rid itself of what has come to be a debilitating injury to the country's international reputation.

In the meantime, international pressure could save lives. All official buildings in East Timor today are adorned by idealized portraits of Indonesia's vice president, Try Sutrisno, former commander of the army. I was reminded of his statement after the Santa Cruz massacre: The young victims "were delinquents who needed to be shot and we will shoot them." I was told by authoritative diplomatic sources that, in the absence of growing international pressure led by the United States, Indonesian forces would simply kill the young resisters of East Timor, as they have killed so many of their elders. All the more reason why distant East Timor should have more than a little meaning for us.

Arnold S. Kohlen is writing a book on East Timor and international policy.