

# 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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## Indonesia dissolves aid consortium

Indonesia has refused to accept any more development aid from the Netherlands and asked for the Inter-Government Group on Indonesia (IGGI) to be dissolved. Indonesian officials said they had made the move because donor countries were linking aid with human rights considerations — particularly in relation to last November's Santa Cruz massacre, when nearly 200 unarmed protesters were gunned down by Indonesian soldiers.

"The way they (the Netherlands) are using the development assistance irritates us," said Indonesia's Economic Affairs Minister, Radius Prawiro. He said the Dutch review of aid following the Santa Cruz massacre was the reason for his government's refusal to accept any more aid from the Dutch, Indonesia's former colonial ruler and one of its harsher critics over human rights.

Dutch aid represents just 2 per cent of the record \$4.7 billion (U.S.) funnelled to Indonesia through IGGI, so the loss of aid dollars will not have a serious financial effect on Indonesia's development programmes.

Prawiro denied that a similar move was in the works in relation to Canadian aid. Canada suspended \$30 million in planned aid projects to Indonesia (leaving existing aid untouched) to protest the Santa Cruz massacre.

Meanwhile, Austria gone a step further than Canada, becoming the first country to suspend all its aid to Indonesia over human rights in East Timor.

The Netherlands has headed the IGGI since it was founded 24 years ago. The IGGI groups 14 donor countries, led by Japan (\$1.3 billion), the United States (\$113 million) and France (\$111 million). Canada's contribution was \$46 million last year. Four multilateral agencies — the World Bank (\$1.6 billion), Asian Development Bank (\$1.1 billion), International Monetary Fund and United Nations Development Programme — are also included in the consortium.

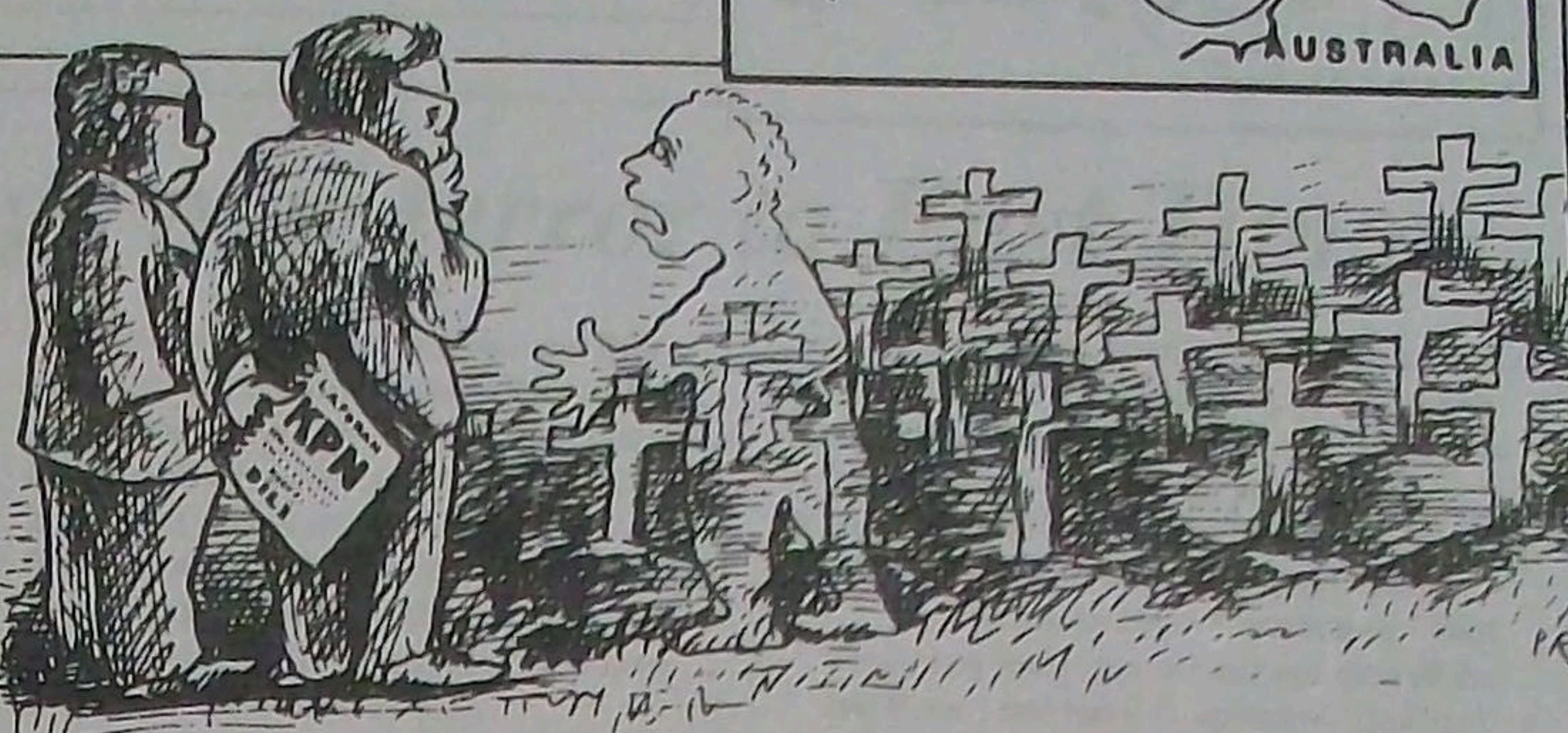
Indonesia is asking IGGI to disband and donor countries to funnel their aid through the World Bank, which has no policy linking aid to human rights.

The Indonesian Front for the Defence of Human Rights (INFIGHT), criticized the government's move. In a statement, INFIGHT said its position "is prompted by a desire for aid to be linked to the realization of basic human rights and the protection of the environment. These concerns will not disappear even though IGGI is dissolved, especially now that they have become global concerns."

### Timor trials open

The trials of thirteen East Timorese accused of "provoking" the Santa Cruz massacre have begun in Dili, East Timor, and Jakarta, Indonesia. International observers and journalists have been banned from attending the trial, and members of Indonesia's Legal Aid Institute were prevented for a week from taking on the defence of the prisoners.

Four of the prisoners — Gregorio da Cunha Saldanha, Francisco Miranda Branco, Fernando de Araujo, and João Freitas da Camara — are charged with subversion, which carries a possible death penalty. The others



"If you say fifty, where is my grave?"

Tempo

face charges of "expressing feelings of hostility, hatred, or contempt towards the Indonesian government." Amnesty International says "others arrested after the massacre, whom the government says it had released, are reportedly confined in Jakarta and East Timor, where they are undergoing 'lectures' or 'mental guidance' ... to 'become sound Indonesians, capable of taking part in development.'"

International solidarity organizations in eight countries, including Canada, have launched a series of protests against the Indonesian "kangaroo courts," and are nominating the thirteen for the prestigious Carter Peace Prize.

### Peace boat turned back

An international "peace boat" carrying 120 students and journalists from 28 countries, including three Canadians, was prevented from landing in East Timor to lay graves at Dili's Santa Cruz cemetery, site of last November's massacre. Three Indonesian frigates met the Lusitania Expresso, a Portuguese car ferry bearing the students, at the twelve-mile offshore limit of Timorese territorial waters.

The boat had also been buzzed by Indonesian planes as it sailed from Darwin, Australia, towards East Timor, and several more warships were in the area. Brig.-General Theo Syaefi, commander of Indonesian military forces in East Timor, flew over the Lusitania Expresso in a military helicopter throughout its voyage.

"They could have blown us up easily," said Genevieve Appleton, a Toronto student who was part of the mission. "It's ironic — the frigates that met us were built by the Netherlands, the planes were from Australia, the guns that were pointed at us were from the U.S., the helicopters' engines were from Canada. If we had been killed, our blood would have been on the hands of our Western governments who supplied the military equipment."

Protesters turned back, stopping to cast their flowers into the Timor Sea.

The Canadian participants had come under heavy pressure from External Affairs to abandon the mission, and were told that Canada would provide them with only minimal protection if violence broke out. Consular representative Rejean Tessier of the Canadian High Commission in Australia made a special trip to Darwin to try to dissuade them from taking part.

"I'm ashamed to be Canadian," David Stewart of Halifax said after the meeting.

### Trent students write for Timor

Seven hundred Trent University students wrote letters of protest to the Indonesian and Canadian governments in a March 25 day of action for East Timor at the university, in Peterborough, Ont. The number is particularly impressive because Trent has fewer than 4,000 full-time students. The letters were all written at an information table in the main library.

The day of action, organized by the

newly-formed Trent East Timor Alert Collective, also included a well-attended public forum.

### Bush pushes military help for Indonesia

The U.S. administration is asking Congress to approve \$2.3 million in new military funding to Indonesia. The funds would be used to train 180 Indonesian military and security officers.

The request is evidence that President George Bush is ignoring a joint Senate-House of Representatives resolution passed last November, which asked him to re-assess funding given to the Indonesian armed forces under the U.S. International Military Education and Training programme.

### Theo's reign of terror

Since being appointed Indonesian military commander for East Timor in January, Brig.-General Theo Syaefi has launched a new "reign of terror" in the country. The situation in East Timor is now at the worst level since soon after the 1975 Indonesian invasion, according to Asia Watch.

"General Theo, an old Timor hand, has put the clock back to the late seventies and early eighties, when military rule was virtually absolute," reports Tapol, the London-based Indonesian human rights campaign. "The 'opening up' of the last three years is now on the way out; every measure taken by General Theo reinforces this."

The new armed forces commander was part of the 1975 invasion force and was involved in large numbers of atrocities in the nine years he fought in East Timor. He is making no apologies for what he himself calls a crackdown on dissent. "If something similar to the 12 November event were to happen under my leadership, the number of victims would probably be higher," he told the Indonesian newspaper *Editor*.

Reports from East Timor are few since foreign journalists were banned from the territory earlier this year. The last journalist to be expelled from the territory, American freelancer Peter Goodman, wrote the following report for the London *Daily Telegraph*:

"Dili [East Timor's capital] is dominated by fear, the streets devoid of activity throughout much of the day. On one recent morning, virtually everyone had a quick look about to see who else might be in the area before saying so much as good morning to a foreigner. At least 10,000 Indonesian troops remain in East Timor and Dili has the air of a city under siege."

At least thirty soldiers are now stationed in every neighbourhood, Tapol reports. As Timorese in Dili whisper: "Before, they were everywhere in the streets, now they have entered our bedrooms." Human rights groups fear that the situation will only get worse.

## Action of the Month

The Indonesian denunciation of the Netherlands for considering linking its aid to Indonesia to respect for human rights indicates an Indonesian offensive against the concept of linked aid. Indonesia is heavily dependent on Western aid, particularly aid funneled through multilateral bodies like the World Bank.

In light of Indonesia's move, Canada should suspend all its aid to Indonesia. Canada should also use its influence at the World Bank and Asian Development Bank to have multilateral aid to Indonesia dependent on Indonesia's human rights record, particularly in its occupied territories including East Timor.

Write to External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougall and Finance Minister Don Mazankowski (Canada's governor at multilateral banks) at: House of Commons, Ottawa Ont., K1A 0A6.

If bilateral Canadian aid to Indonesia is restored, come to a demonstration the **Saturday** after the announcement at Barbara McDougall's Toronto constituency office (21 Vaughan Rd., 2 blocks west from St. Clair West subway).