

# East Timor Update

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Number 38 — February 1, 1995 • Published by the East Timor Alert Network, PO Box 562, Station P, Toronto, M5S 2T1 (416) 531-5850

## Timor oil stained with blood

The East Timor case landed in the World Court on Jan. 31. The Portuguese government is suing Australia for stealing the offshore oil deposits of the Timor Gap, saying the resource belongs to the people of East Timor under international law. Australia and Indonesia signed a treaty several years ago dividing up the rich oil deposits (up to one billion barrels) of the Timor Gap. The Portuguese wanted to sue Indonesia as well, but Indonesia does not recognize the World Court's jurisdiction.

The case is about far more than oil, however — it effectively provides a forum to test the international legal status of East Timor, invaded and occupied by Indonesia 20 years ago. "If Portugal wins the case, it will help other governments in the world to support our case and make clear that Indonesia's occupation is illegal," said José Amorim Dias, European representative for the East Timorese resistance movement CNRM.

Australia agreed to formally recognize East Timor as a province of Indonesia — a step no other Western government has taken — in order to close the Timor Gap deal. Several American and Australian companies have already begun exploratory drilling.

### After the journalists left

Last November's Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, meant as an opportunity for Indonesia to shine in the world spotlight, ended up throwing the light of publicity on East Timor, as hundreds of Timorese rallied for independence in both Timor and Indonesia's capital, Jakarta. With thousands of overseas journalists and a dozen heads of state (including Canada's Jean Chrétien and U.S. president Bill Clinton) in the country, Indonesian President Suharto promised there would be no reprisals. Since the journalists left, however, quite the opposite has been the case. Human rights violations in December and January are too numerous to list, but a selection follows.

- Dozens who protested during APEC were arrested and tortured in custody.

- On Dec. 7, the 19th anniversary of the invasion of East Timor, members of a pro-Indonesian vigilante group attacked the offices of the newspaper Suara Timor Timur. The incident was condemned by Indonesia's semi-underground Association of Independent Journalists.

- 24 East Timorese students were arrested on Jan. 9 for holding a pro-independence demonstration at the University of East Timor.

- Five people were killed when security forces cracked down on a demonstration in Baucau, East Timor's second-largest city. The demonstration started after the murder of a Timorese man by an Indonesian transmigrant. Indonesian soldiers then clashed with protesters, shooting four more people. Part of Baucau market was burned. "It is



the responsibility of the police and the military. They should be able to prevent this from happening," East Timor's Bishop, Carlos Ximenes Belo, commented.

- "Rui" Celso Oliveira was arrested for sending information on human rights in East Timor overseas.

- Three Indonesian soldiers were killed in a clash with Timorese guerrillas in early January near Dili, the capital of East Timor. When military authorities were unable to track down the guerrillas, they rounded up six local civilians and shot them in cold blood.

- Six long-term East Timorese prisoners held a hunger strike in January to demand that they be moved to a prison in East Timor, closer to their families. The six are currently being held at Semarang prison in Java. There has been no response to date from prison authorities.

### Indonesia defies UN

Human rights violations are still widespread in East Timor, despite resolutions at the last three sessions of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, says a report from a special UN observer. "The Special Rapporteur urges the Indonesian authorities to carry out thorough, prompt and impartial investigations of all suspected cases of extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and enforced or involuntary disappearances," said Mr. Bacre Waly Ndiaye, a Senegalese who is the UN's special rapporteur on extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions.

Ndiaye's report, issued following a mission to East Timor last July, called for a "drastic reduction" in the Indonesian troop presence. He also stated that the Santa Cruz massacre of Nov. 12,

1991 (when over 250 unarmed Timorese were gunned down by Indonesian soldiers at the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili) was still in need of an international, impartial investigation.

Finally, Ndiaye called for his recommendations, and those of the special rapporteur on torture who visited East Timor in 1991, to be speedily implemented. This seems unlikely, unless Indonesia is called to account at this year's Human Rights Commission meetings, which open in Geneva this month.

The East Timor Alert Network is asking supporters, as a matter of urgency, to write to Foreign Minister André Ouellet (House of Commons, Ottawa Ont., K1A 0A6, Fax 613-995-9926). Please ask that Canadian representatives at the commission

meeting push for a strong resolution, not a so-called "consensus declaration" approved in advance by Indonesia. Canada should also demand that past commission resolutions on East Timor — such as free access to the territory for human rights groups like Amnesty International — be enforced. Finally, Canada should seek to have the recommendations of the two UN special rapporteurs enforced, and seek approval for UN rapporteurs in other areas to go to East Timor.

### Labour organizers jailed

Two leading members of Indonesia's only free trade union and a leading union activist have been jailed for peaceful labour organizing. Muchtar Pakpahan, chair of the SBSI (Indonesian Prosperity Trade Union) was sentenced to three to four years in jail. Amosi Telaumbanua, chair of the SBSI's branch in Medan (North Sumatra) was jailed for fifteen months to three years. Both were charged with responsibility

for organizing a strike in the industrial city of Medan last spring. Muchtar suffers from a kidney condition and may not be receiving proper care in jail. Amnesty International believes "the two are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for peacefully promoting workers' rights ... Amnesty International is concerned that the authorities used the unrest in Medan as a pretext for a broader crackdown on peaceful labour activism and to silence the advocates of workers' rights," according to an AI urgent action.

### Solidarity abroad

The first-ever demonstrations for East Timor have been held in South Korea and Sri Lanka, more signs of growing concern within Asia. On Dec. 2, 25 Korean human rights advocates gathered in Seoul for a peaceful rally, which was attacked and broken up by 50 Korean riot police. "The serious human rights violations in East Timor are no longer an issue of East Timor itself or Indonesia; yet it is a great challenge and shame to the peoples in the Asia Pacific region," said a statement from the Korean Human Rights Network (KOHNET), which organized the event. "Universal values such as human rights and democracy are becoming increasingly important in an era of globalization. Our concern for human rights in other nations is an expression of the conscience of humankind and a practice of the universality of human rights, not an intervention in the affairs of another country. Therefore, as members of the global village, we wish to express our strong aspiration for full restoration of human rights and East Timor's right to self-determination," KOHNET continued. KOHNET has nine member organizations, including Christian and Buddhist churches and a pro-unification group.

Meanwhile, human rights activists also demonstrated for East Timor in Colombo, the capital of war-torn Sri Lanka.

In January, European solidarity groups reaffirmed their commitment at a gathering in Brussels. An Asia Pacific solidarity gathering is expected this year.

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