



# EAST TIMOR UPDATE

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*In December 1975, just ten days after it had declared its independence from Portugal, the tiny southeast Asian country of East Timor was invaded by its neighbour, Indonesia. In the 18 years since then, 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 the Indonesian armed forces to maintain their illegal occupation of East Timor*

*East Timor Update is a monthly news service edited in Toronto by the East Timor Alert Network. The service is also available by electronic mail: email etan@web.apc.org. Contact ETAN for more information:*

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*For up-to-the day information in East Timor, call ETAN/Vancouver's information line: (604) 739-4947.*

## Canadian gov't moves an inch CIDA to alter Timor aid policies

Canada will be refocusing its aid program in Indonesian-occupied East Timor to address concerns that the existing program is not helping the people. Following extensive consultations with overseas leaders in the East Timorese pro-independence movement CNRM, East Timor's Catholic Bishop, and members of the East Timor Alert Network, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has started the ball rolling on several projects that circumvent government-controlled channels.

CIDA has been one of the top donors in East Timor in recent years, and has a history of ignoring the charge that its "aid" programs there actually serve to legitimize Indonesian military rule over East Timor, which is not recognized by the United Nations or the government of Canada. As recently as the spring of 1993, a CIDA document on aid to East Timor took a tone that dismissed the criticisms, levelled by church and human rights organizations.

CIDA has now decided to go part of the way towards changing that. After hearing the resistance view that only aid programs funnelled through the Catholic Church should be approved, and after meeting East Timor Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo in Ottawa, CIDA agreed to fund a project sponsored by the church. It also approved a grant to the Legal Aid Institute of Indonesia, the only independent human rights group in the country that is able to function legally. A legal aid centre will be set up in Dili, the capital of East Timor, thereby providing an invaluable monitoring of the human rights situation.

Existing aid projects continue, but CIDA has indicated its willingness to continue consulting the East Timor Alert Network on the appropriateness of its aid program.

Sources also say that \$30 million in aid projects to Indonesia suspended to protest the massacre of more than 250 Timorese civilians in 1991 can be considered to be cancelled for good.

Meanwhile, an official in the Department of Foreign Affairs has responded to the demand that Canada announce an embargo on weapons sales to Indonesia. In a letter to ETAN/Ottawa, Marius Grinius, head of the Asia Pacific South Relations Division, wrote that "Canada has adopted a very stringent policy.... At the moment, every contract involving the sale to Indonesia of equipment which could conceivably be used against its population is subjected to close scrutiny and invariably refused.... We share your concern that Canadian equipment or parts could eventually find their way to Indonesia and are active in multilateral fora in promoting the adoption of stricter measures by the US and others to ensure that Canada's policy on arms sales is not circumvented in this way."

Grinius added that Canada has urged

Indonesia to release jailed resistance leader Xanana Gusmão and grant free access to East Timor for international humanitarian organizations.

The government's moves in 1993 are small steps towards reversing Canada's history of support for its "friend," Indonesian president Suharto. They are evidence that the years of lobbying and the letters of hundreds of Canadians are beginning to pay off.

**ETAN urges our supporters to write to the new minister of foreign affairs, André Ouellet, and his junior minister for Asia Pacific affairs, Raymond Chan (and please send a copy to Parliamentarians for East Timor c/o David Kilgour MP. All can be written postage free at House of Commons, Ottawa Ont., K1A 0A6.)**

The government should be thanked for the measures it has already taken, but urged to do more. Specifically, Canada should announce a formal embargo on the sale of weapons to the Indonesian armed forces and encourage other countries to make similar declarations; ensure that all aid going to East Timor actually helps by channelling all aid through the Church, International Committee of the Red Cross, or Legal Aid Institute; and consider linking trade with Indonesia to respect for human rights as it has done with aid.

### Xanana denied visitors

Xanana Gusmão, the jailed leader of East Timor's resistance movement CNRM, has written to the International Commission of Jurists on the abuses of justice in his 1993 trial in front of an Indonesian court. The letter documented the numerous abuses of international law and Indonesia's own justice system during the trial and asked that it be nullified.

That prompted Indonesian authorities to order a ban on visits to Xanana by family members and human rights supporters (both Indonesian and international). Baharuddin Lopa, director general of Cipinang prison, told the official news agency Antara that "the decision was taken



East Timor benefit, Ottawa: "Abé ho Aloz" in performance

because Gusmão has tarnished the good image of Indonesia abroad."

However, Xanana has been allowed to receive mail, and has read and replied to dozens of letters from supporters in Portugal. International solidarity organizations are asking for post cards or letters of support (in Portuguese or English) to be sent to Xanana. For the address, please call ETAN/Toronto at (416) 531-5850.

### Indonesia holds its own Timor talks

Indonesia sponsored a round of "reconciliation talks" in London in December that were ignored by all but a few Timorese. The tide of international opinion has been turning against Indonesia and in favour of peace plans presented by CNRM, East Timor's independence movement. To get around this, Indonesia floated the idea of talks between Timorese for and against the integration of their country into Indonesia.

The idea was rejected by CNRM, which has in the past suggested face-to-face talks with Indonesia and now is supporting a peace talks process under the auspices of the United Nations. Only a handful of pro-independence Timorese attended, none of them able to say they represented anyone other than themselves. East Timor Bishop Carlos Belo said he knew nothing about the talks.

The spectacle, which featured delegates being shunted to the meeting-place under cover of darkness, was a sharp contrast to one presented a few days later in Lisbon. There, leaders of CNRM and the two main pre-invasion political parties — Fretilin and UDT — rejected the London talks as irrelevant and said they were united in their desire for a real peace, with international involvement.

**\*\*NEW\*\*  
FREE Xanana Gusmão buttons  
only \$2 from ETAN Toronto!!!**