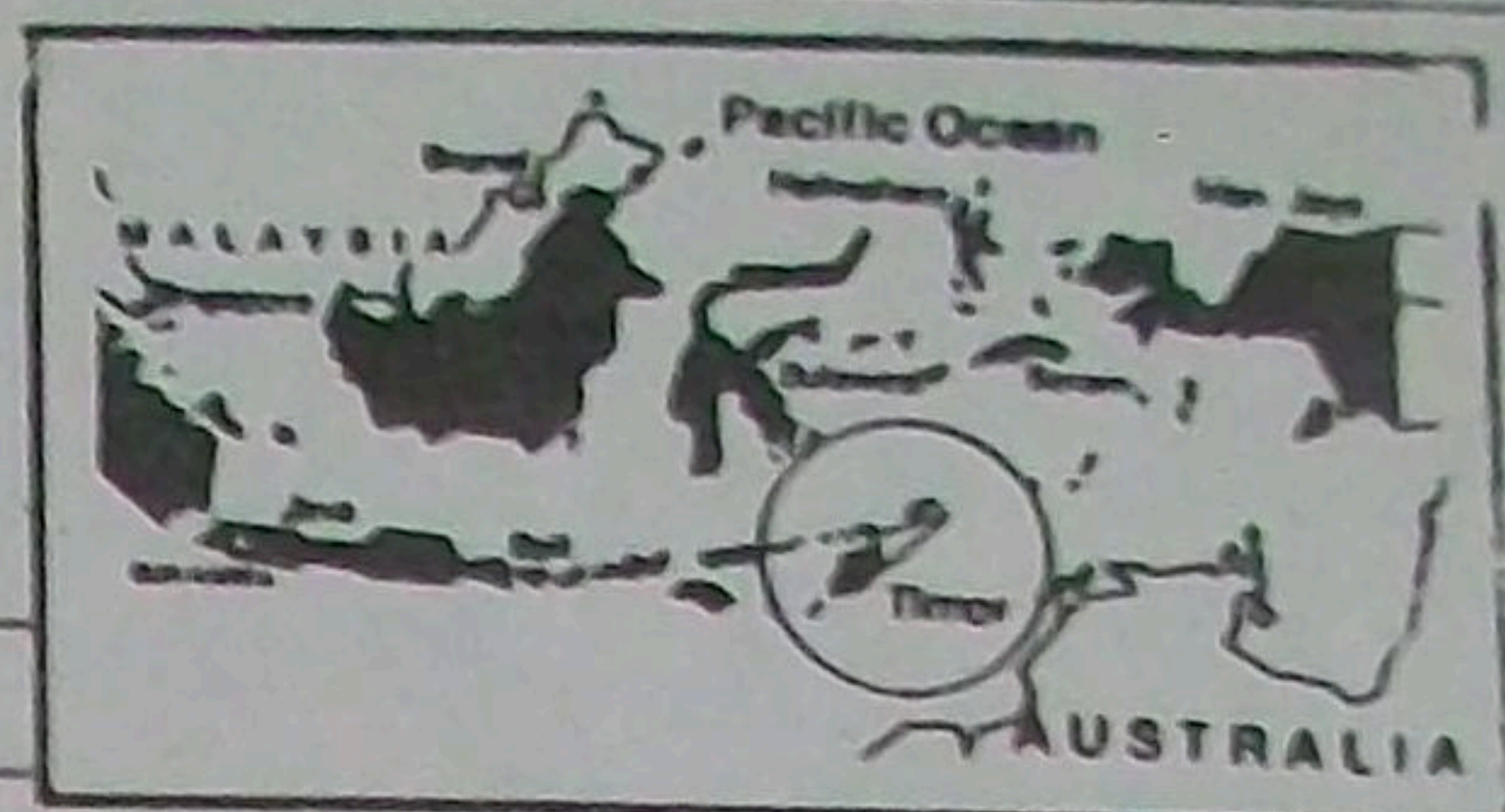


EAST TIMOR UPDATE

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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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East Timor massacre remembered worldwide

On November 12, 1991, Indonesian soldiers gunned down a crowd of unarmed Timorese at the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, East Timor. According to an exhaustive study undertaken by Timorese activists in Dili and released by the Lisbon-based ecumenical group Peace is Possible in East Timor, 273 Timorese were killed in the massacre, while 382 were wounded and 250 disappeared.

Despite the protests of Western governments at the time, it is now back to business as usual between the West and Indonesia.

The first anniversary of the Santa Cruz massacre was marked as a day of mourning and protest around the world.

• In Canada, the East Timor Alert Network co-ordinated a nationwide day of vigils for peace in East Timor. Seventy people picketed the offices of Garuda Indonesian Airlines in Vancouver. Another 70 gathered on Parliament Hill in Ottawa and marched to a weapons dealers' convention at a local hotel, in an event co-sponsored with the Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade. Marchers called on Canada to stop selling arms to Indonesia and other human rights violators. A vigil at the Toronto Indonesian Consulate attracted 35 people from ETAN groups in Toronto and Hamilton. Vigils were also held at Guelph University, Asamera Oil in Calgary, and the Santa Cruz parish in Montreal.

ETAN and the Canadian Peace Alliance combined to publish an open letter to the government of Canada on Nov. 12 in the Ottawa Citizen and Vancouver Sun. The letter was signed by more than 30 organizations (from 8 provinces and one territory) and more than 100 individuals, including Nobel prize winner John Polanyi, writer Jane Callwood and Timothy Findley, ecologist David Suzuki, singers Bruce Cockburn and Ruffi, Maude Barlow, Catholic Bishops Remi De Roo of Victoria and John Sherlock of London, Ont., Canadian Council of Churches president Bruce McLeod, Iona Campagnolo, Ursula Franklin, and 13 members of parliament, including the human rights critics of the Liberal and New Democratic Parties. Representatives of all the major Canadian churches signed the letter.

• In Malaysia, Nov. 12 was marked by the first public event of the newly-formed East Timor Information Network, followed by a candlelight vigil. Over 100 Malaysians signed a strong statement opposing their government's alliance with Indonesia, a remarkable feat in a country where freedom of speech is extremely limited. Every Catholic church in Penang, where ETIN is based, dedicated a special mass to the people of East Timor on Nov. 15, the first Sunday after the anniversary.

"We will organize more of such activities to counteract the media blackout which has so far prevented more Malaysians from learning about the unspeakable military atrocities which are occurring right on our doorstep," said an ETIN spokesperson.

• The Free East Timor! coalition in Japan presented a petition with 60,000 signatures to the Japanese parliament, calling for Japan to link its aid to Indonesia (Japan is the number one aid donor, giving \$1.3 billion) conditional on Indonesia leaving East Timor. The coalition also held a demonstration at the Indonesian Embassy in Tokyo and launched a speaking tour of three Timorese refugee women.

• In the United States, an interfaith service and demonstration were staged in New York City by the East Timor Action Network,

which was formed less than one year ago in response to the Santa Cruz massacre. Showings of Cold Blood, the documentary of the massacre, were held in several campuses from California to Rhode Island.

• Portugal marked the Nov. 12 with a national day of mourning. Every school in the country held a special debate on East Timor. Members of all parties in the Portuguese parliament spoke up for the rights of the East Timorese. President Mario Soares re-iterated his country's demand for a referendum on independence for East Timor. Peace is Possible planted 271 crosses in a Lisbon park to represent the dead, and published their names in Lisbon newspaper ads.

• In England, an all-party motion marking the anniversary and calling for the British government to back human rights in East Timor was tabled in the House of Commons. The British Coalition for East Timor organized a candlelight vigil and interfaith service in London and many events in smaller centres around the country.

• Angry protests were held all around Australia, East Timor's nearest neighbour after Indonesia. The largest demonstrations took place in Darwin and Sydney.

• Tight surveillance of activists prevented a remembrance in Indonesia, but the underground Indonesian Front for the Defence of Human Rights made its position clear with an open letter to visiting Australian parliamentarians signed by co-ordinator Saleh Abdullah. INFIGHT called for a referendum in East Timor and for aid to be linked with human rights. "Welcome to Indonesia," the letter said, "where workers are forbidden to organize, where political and civil rights are repressed, where detainees are tortured, sometimes to death. Welcome to a country where to speak out and to organize means jail."

• Nov. 12 was also marked in Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland and other countries.

Silent mouths in Timor

Indonesian authorities in East Timor took a hard line to ensure there would be no protests in the territory on the anniversary of the Santa Cruz massacre. Indonesia's new governor of East Timor, José Abilio Osorio Soares, set the tone by telling an Indonesian newspaper that no-one should have been allowed to escape the cemetery alive last Nov. 12. "As far as I'm concerned, I think far more should have died," he said. "Why did only that number die? Why not all the one thousand?"

Brig.-Gen. Theo Syaifei, who heads the ten Indonesian battalions in East Timor, is similarly unrepentant. "If something similar to the 12 November event were to happen under my leadership, the number of victims would probably be higher," he said earlier this year.

In the last week of October, at least 1,000 Timorese — some reports say as many as 5,000 — were arrested in house-to-house searches and held for short interrogations. Amnesty International, barred from visiting East Timor in late October, reported that the human rights situation continues to deteriorate. "Torture and ill-treatment of prisoners continues to be both widespread and routine," Amnesty said.

With special permits required to visit the Santa Cruz cemetery and remembrance masses banned by government decree, a commemora-



tion was possible. The silence of the people on Nov. 12, however, was eloquent in itself.

"For us the youth, it is an important day, our anniversary," one young woman told a Reuter reporter. "We will remember it but we fear to do so openly."

General flees U.S.

Indonesian general Sintong Panjaitan, who was head of the eastern Indonesia military command (which includes East Timor) last November, has fled the United States rather than face a lawsuit for his part in the massacre. A suit had been brought against Sintong, resident in Boston since he was made the scapegoat for the massacre and dismissed from his command, by the Centre for Constitutional Rights. The centre was acting on behalf of Helen Todd, the mother of slain New Zealand citizen Kamal Bamadaj, the sole non-Timorese victim at Santa Cruz.

Heap: end aid to Indonesia

Toronto NDP MP Dan Heap has introduced a private member's bill calling on the Canadian government to end all economic aid and weapons sales to Indonesia. In 1991, Canada gave Indonesia \$46 million in aid (third among all recipients of Canadian aid dollars) and made direct military sales valued at \$28,000. Heap's bill is one of many in the House that must be selected from for debate. Letters of support for the bill should be sent to Dan Heap, House of Commons, Ottawa Ont., K1A 0A6 (postage free).

