

INDONESIA - HUMAN RIGHTS - EAST TIMOR - AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL *

28. THE INDONESIAN FOREIGN MINISTER RESPONDS TO AN AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL REPORT

In statements on 28th June 1985 in Jakarta Foreign Minister Dr. Mochtar Kusumaatmadja rejected Amnesty International's allegations of systematic human rights violations in East Timor. Dr. Mochtar refuted Amnesty's assertions contained in its report on East Timor, and stated that it is based on rumours and questionable sources without any attempts to verify them with Indonesia.

Following are excerpts from Foreign Minister's statement:

"Lately, we have been witnessing an orchestrated anti-Indonesian campaign. Launched by certain quarters, which has always demonstrated a hostile attitude toward Indonesia. Essentially, the campaign consists of fabricated accusations which are completely without foundation. These baseless assertions are tantamount to attempts at discrediting Indonesia in the eyes of the international community. For the record, malicious charges of murder, torture, famine and trial without due-process in East Timor are all unfounded and utterly false".

"The accusations of murder and torture are so contrary to our national philosophy, Pancasila, that they are prima facie patently untrue. The accusation of trial without due process of law, including denial of defense attorneys, is also not true. Moreover, the procedure is for pre-trial investigation to establish who could be brought to trial and those against whom the court has found insufficient evidence have been released".

"Allegations that foreign observers, the ICRC as well as other international agencies, are not allowed access to East Timor are also completely contrary to the facts. The ICRC, UNICEF, CRS (Catholic Relief Services) and others have been operating in East Timor for many years and are still carrying out their various humanitarian activities there to this very day. In addition, there have been many visits to East Timor by Ambassadors of various countries to Indonesia, other high ranking foreign officials such as Parliamentary Delegations, eminent persons and foreign journalists who have observed first hand the reality in East Timor and whose findings prove that the facts do not support the accusations".

..../26.

* (This document is an extract from Indonesian Newsletter, published by the Information Service of the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, Canberra).

- 26 -

"Hence the Indonesian Government does not deem it necessary to again address baseless and well worn allegations that have already been refuted many times in the past. Therefore, it is to be regretted that certain groups with an international reputation have associated themselves with such a biased campaign, by siding with the anti-Indonesian elements".

"Basically, Amnesty International is an organization with good intentions, but this doesn't mean that it cannot be manipulated. If however, concern is expressed in a responsible manner, as is done by bonafide international organizations like the ICRC, which has been operating here for several years, making visits on the spot, examining conditions, talking to the people concerned, and we do allow these people to do everything they want after agreeing at first on the places and what they are to do, then this kind of criticism if you call it that, is beneficial both ways. We are made aware of things that might not be known in Jakarta and it can be shown that they have corrected the conditions and that things have improved considerably. Now the findings of the ICRC, even when they are favourable to the Indonesian Government or I would say are especially favourable to Indonesia, cannot be publicized".

"Their (ICRC) reports are confidential. There was one time that we did say that a certain accusation is not true, that the ICRC has gone to these places and found that there was no grounds for the accusation, immediately people said: "Oh you are making use of a secret report". This is the situation we are in. They can say what they want with the knowledge that there is no way others can check this accusation, so people allege that they are true. We don't mind people going to East Timor, but we want these people to be responsible people, reputable people and people whom we can be reasonably sure of giving a balanced report. It's not that we want a report that is all favourable to us because such a report would not be credible either, but at least not one that is only finding fault and doesn't see the good things that we have been doing".

"As a part of the ongoing policy to maintain access to East Timor on a regular basis for foreign representatives, parliamentary missions, international agencies, journalists and others, four foreign reporters and an Indonesian journalist arrived in Dili on July 1 for a five day visit to East Timor Province. They are Andre Feyard from Asia Week, Barbara Crossette from the New York Times, Jacques Gaillon from the Agence France Presse, Lincoln Kay from the Far Eastern Economic Review and Haryo Seputra from Suara Karya, an Indonesian daily newspaper. The five reporters paid a courtesy call on East Timor Governor Mario Carrascalao".

..../27.

- 27 -

Governor Carrascalao expressed his pleasure with the visit intended to provide an opportunity for direct news coverage of the various development activities and achievements made by the government and the people of East Timor after nine years of integration. He said the present situation in East Timor is day by day growing better because of the consciousness of the East Timorese to take part in various sectors of development in order to abolish the poverty, backwardness and illiteracy inherited from 450 years of Portuguese colonialism.

"I don't want to make many comments. You may directly see for yourselves the existing facts in the Regencies, districts, and villages of this region", said the Governor. The meeting between the foreign reporters and Governor Carrascalao was open and cordial. The reporters were given a great deal of information so that they would be able to make a comparison between present conditions in East Timor and the colonial era.

Meanwhile the AFP reported from Sydney on June 28 that John Bunton, Editor of Nusantara, a London based magazine on Indonesian and South-east Asian affairs, doubted Amnesty International's accusations of "brutality" in East Timor.

Following is the full text of the AFP news item:-

"British writer John Bunton, just back from a 10-day trip to East Timor, Friday strongly disputed this week's Amnesty International report on brutality in the former Portuguese colony."

Bunton, Editor of Nusantara, a monthly review of Indonesia and Southeast Asian Affairs published in Britain, was speaking from London to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). He said he saw no evidence during his trip to the brutality in East Timor identified by the Amnesty International Report. The 92-page report said the Indonesian Army has systematically carried out torture and executions in East Timor and undertaken mass deportation of civilians since Indonesia ruled the former colony in 1975. Asked on ABC Radio how the vast difference in his account of the situation and that Amnesty could have come about, Mr Bunton said "The difference is I have been there and they haven't. Amnesty International had on second hand reports. The British writer said that estimates of deaths through atrocities numbering as many as 200,000 or one-third of East Timor's population were "absolute nonsense".

A closer estimate would be that given by the Indonesian Government of between 50,000 and 70,000 and most of these deaths had been due to starvation in the hills, Bunton said.

..../28.

- 28 -

He also found Atauro Island, reputed to be the scene of torture and imprisonment, "one of the most enchanting islands I have ever seen".

"The inhabitants were well fed, with their own plots of land, and they were able to fish and move about whenever they wished. The East Timorese were 'infinitely better off' under Indonesian rule than under the Portuguese," Bunton said.

There is no question that resources the Indonesians are pumping into East Timor are on a prodigious scale.

John Bunton's view has been supported by Australia's Herald and Weekly Time political correspondent John Hamilton who visited East Timor for a week in 1983. Hamilton wrote a series of reports which were carried by newspapers all over Australia. They are based on first hand experience and won an award for outstanding international journalistic reporting.