

On 15th Anniversary of Timor Massacre Rights Network Calls for Justice

ETAN Urges Administration, New Congress to Support International Tribunal

Monday 11 December 2006, by [ETAN](#) (Date first published: 12 November 2006).

November 12, 2006 - On the fifteenth anniversary of the infamous massacre at Santa Cruz cemetery in Timor-Leste, the East Timor and Indonesia Action Network (ETAN) called for justice for its victims and their families, as well as the many others killed and victimized during Indonesia's invasion and occupation of the territory from 1975 to 1999. The 1991 massacre — witnessed and filmed by foreign journalists - was a turning point in Timor-Leste's struggle for self-determination.

"East Timor is now independent, but its people cannot overcome their tragic past until there is accountability for decades of systematic human rights violations by the Indonesian military," said John M. Miller, National Coordinator of ETAN. "This de facto impunity has an impact on Timor-Leste today, contributing to the current security crisis which forced half the capital's residents from their homes. ETAN will not rest until justice is done."

"We urge the new Congress to take action toward accountability and justice, moving beyond the Bush administration's lip service to support for an international tribunal to try crimes against humanity committed in Timor-Leste," said Miller. "Congress should address the recommendations of Timor-Leste's truth and reconciliation commission, especially its calls for a tribunal, reparations and restrictions on assistance to Indonesia's military. By doing so, Congress will demonstrate its commitment to human rights and begin to redress the years of active U.S. support for Indonesia's brutal, illegal occupation of Timor-Leste," added Miller.

"On this important anniversary, we again join with the Timorese people in urging the United States and the international community to seriously pursue the Indonesian generals and political leaders who organized and directed

numerous crimes during the 24-years of illegal occupation. A credible international tribunal is the only way to end impunity,” said Miller.

“After seven years and numerous processes, neither Indonesia, Timor-Leste nor the United Nations has mustered the political will needed to achieve accountability,” said Miller.

“Unfortunately, this impunity leads some in Timor-Leste to believe they will not be held accountable when they commit violent crimes and sometimes motivates violent retaliation by victims who do not expect redress from the legal system.”

Background

On November 12, 1991, Indonesian troops opened fire on a memorial procession which had become a peaceful pro-independence demonstration at the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, Timor-Leste’s capital. More than 270 mostly-young Timorese were murdered. This massacre, unlike many others committed during Indonesia’s 24-year occupation, was witnessed by international journalists, whose video and photographs were shown worldwide. The Santa Cruz massacre galvanized international support for Timor-Leste and was the catalyst for congressional action to stem the flow of U.S. weapons and other assistance for Indonesia’s security forces.

During more than two decades of occupation of Timor-Leste, Indonesian soldiers committed serious crimes with impunity, taking well over 100,000 Timorese lives and torturing and displacing countless others.

Timor-Leste’s Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation researched and documented the new nation’s experiences during the occupation. The Commission recommended establishment of an international criminal tribunal and also advocated that countries (including the U.S.) which backed the occupation and corporations which sold weapons to Indonesia during that period to pay reparations to victims. The commission urged the international community not to support Indonesia’s military until it was thoroughly reformed and respectful of human rights.

Contact: John M. Miller,
718-596-7668; mobile: 917-690-4391, john@etan.org

ETAN was formed in reaction to the Santa Cruz massacre. The U.S.-based organization advocates for democracy, justice and human rights for Timor-Leste and Indonesia. For more information on the massacre see

<http://etan.org/timor/SntaCRUZ.htm>><http://etan.org/timor/SntaCRUZ.htm>

or see ETAN's web site:

<http://www.etan.org>><http://www.etan.org>