

Indonesia: Villagers describe brutal attack by soldiers that left scores injured, one dead

Monday 18 November 2024, by [BALOWSKI James](#), [SINAGA Nikson](#) (Date first published: 11 November 2024).

Scores of TNI (Indonesian Military) soldiers from the Medan 2 Artillery Battalion/Kilap Sumagan (Armed-2/KS) attacked residents in the Selamat Village near their headquarters in the Sibiru-Biru sub-district, Deli Serdang regency, North Sumatra on Friday November 8.

The conflict began with a quarrel on the road when the soldiers were passed by a group of motorcycle riders. The TNI members, who were carrying knives, double sticks and other weapons, then combed the village, broke into houses, dragged people out and assaulted residents resulting in several people being injured and one killed.

Rofika Tarigan (18) was one of the victims of the attack. "I just came out of the house to buy cigarettes. When I was about to go home, I saw scores of TNI members entering the village", said Tarigan.

"We don't know for sure the reason for Armed-2 members attacking our village. It was said, they came to find people who quarrelled with them when they were riding motorcycles on the road", said Bahrin, the head of the Selamat Village on Monday October 11.

Tarigan then ran to his grandmother's house and closed the door. Even though they did not know anything, his grandmother's house was not spared and became a target of the attack. The soldiers broke down the door and began asking about the whereabouts of someone named Andre Ginting. Tarigan said that he did not know.

"I was dragged out of the house. Then I was beaten continuously by scores of Armed[-2/KS] members. After being injured, I was taken to the Armed dormitory. I was treated like a criminal, even though I didn't know anything", said Tarigan.

As a result of the assault and attack Tarigan suffered a tear on head, his back was covered in bruises and his hands were also bruised and swollen after being allegedly hit with a pistol. "There was a big crowd around 50 people. I saw some carrying double sticks, some carried sharp weapons", said Tarigan.

Tarigan and several people who were detained at the Armed-2/KS headquarters were finally released on Saturday morning. Following the attack, village residents tried to assist victims who had been assaulted. Dozens of injured residents had to be taken to hospital.

They were shocked when they saw another resident, Raden Barus (60), lying covered in blood on the side of the road. He had suffered injuries all over his body. It is unknown how or why Barus came to be a victim.

"When he was found, Raden was still alive, but his condition was critical. We tried to take him to the

hospital, but had died on the way”, said Bahrun.

Bahrun said that scores of people suffered injuries due to the attack by the TNI soldiers. They were villagers who do not know anything about the quarrel between the TNI with the people they were looking for. As many as eight residents suffered serious injuries and had to be hospitalised.

They were initially treated at the Sembiring Public Hospital but were then transferred to the Putri Hijau Hospital belonging to the Bukit Barisan Kodam I (Regional Military Command). Residents who suffered minor injuries were allowed to go straight home after receiving treatment.

Bahrun said that the residents did not accept the death of Raden. He was a village community leader who grew old along with the community. Residents became enraged over Raden’s death.

After Raden’s body was autopsied at the Bhayangkara Hospital in Medan, hundreds of residents gathered to hold a protest at the Armed-2/KS. They also brought Raden’s body and placed it in front of the Armed-2/KS headquarters demanding justice and due legal process for Raden’s death.

Since the protest at the Armed 2 the atmosphere of in village has become tense and the blind anger of the TNI has yet to subside. Armed-2 trucks go back and forth passing through the village road at high speed.

The tension only began to subside when the commander of the Bukit Barisan Kodam I, Lieutenant General Mohamad Hasan, came to the Armed-2 headquarters and met with residents. Hasan apologised directly to the residents, especially the victims’ families. He also guaranteed that his soldiers would not carry out any more attacks on residents.

Hasan also personally attended Raden’s funeral. In front of Hasan, Raden’s family members cried hysterically and requested that they be given justice, asking that the soldiers who assaulted and killed Raden be prosecuted. In response, Hasan promised to legally process all of the Armed-2 members involved in the attack.

“I have met with the family of Bapak [Mr] Raden Barus, including several whose families are still being treated [in hospital]. We convey our apologies. We will ensure that this incident is not repeated”, said Hasan.

Hasan said he deeply regretted the actions taken by his members. “Even if I have to take the place of the deceased, I’m ready to do that now. I am sincere”, he said.

The head of the Bukit Barisan (BB) Kodam I information division, Colonel Dody Yudha, explained that legal proceedings have already been initiated against all of the Armed-2 members involved in the attack. “There are 33 people who were confirmed [to have been involved in the attack]. They are being questioned by BB Kodam I military police”, said Yudha.

Yudha said that Bukit Barisan military commander has held a direct briefing at Armed-2 to give directions to all soldiers. Hasan also personally led mediation with residents.

“Essentially, there will be no more incidents of such attacks so that it is hoped that the atmosphere will be conducive there”, said Yudha. When asked about the reason for the attack, Yudha said they were still investigating this.

The Bukit Barisan Kodam I has not yet explained the chronology of the attack based on the results of their investigation. It is suspected that Armed-2 members were involved in a fight with several young people in the Selamat Village on Friday afternoon. The fight began with a quarrel between

members of the TNI and residents who were passing by on the road.

****Abridged slightly due to repetition****

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Translated by James Balowski

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