

# Estafeta

Voice of the East Timor Action Network/U.S.

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## Will East Timor See Justice?

*by Charles Scheiner*

Eighteen months have elapsed since the Indonesian military and its militia proxies devastated East Timor. A quarter century has passed since the U.S.-supported Indonesian invasion of East Timor began an occupation which killed one-third of the population and kidnapped, raped, tortured and terrorized hundreds of thousands more. Uncountable crimes against humanity have been committed in East Timor since 1975 by Indonesian forces, with the complicity of the world's "great powers." It is a record which cries out for justice.

### Indonesian incapacity, international reluctance

The Indonesian government is besieged from many sides. Acehese and West Papuans are demanding self-determination, internal conflicts rage in Kalimantan and Maluku, atrocities are rampant in all these areas and elsewhere. The military is desperately struggling to keep its Suharto-era power. It's not surprising that President Wahid and his Attorney General Marzuki Darusman have achieved little head-



**The Hotel Olympia, moored in Dili harbor opposite UNTAET HQ until New Year's Day 2001, housed many international UNTAET staff and was a symbol of the economic and cultural disparity between East Timorese and those who came to govern them.**

Charles Scheiner

way in bringing the architects of East Timor's invasion, occupation and destruction to justice.

In January 2000, an Indonesian government commission named suspects, going up to the highest levels of the military, for the 1999 violence in East Timor. Four months later, Indonesia signed an agreement with the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) to cooperate in supplying witnesses and transferring suspects. On April 25, 2000, the chairman of the UN Human Rights Commission lauded Indonesia's promises to prosecute crimes against humanity committed in East Timor and to cooperate with UNTAET. Many were hopeful the rule of law would emerge in Indonesia, and that criminals would be brought to justice. Indonesian pro-democ-

racy activists urged the international community to support judicial processes in the archipelago.

The rest of 2000 saw a steady decline in Indonesia's willingness and/or capability to achieve justice. No prosecutions have occurred,

*(continued on page 10)*

## Despite Resistance, ETAN Continues Legislative Efforts

*by Diane Farsetta*

ETAN and its allies in Washington continue to work to achieve an international tribunal for East Timor, to call attention to women's issues in East Timor, to maintain the ban on U.S.-Indonesia military ties, and to ensure the U.S. government provides adequate reconstruction aid to East Timor and scholarships for East Timorese students. ETAN is also lobbying the U.S. to actively work through the United Nations and with the Indonesian government for a proper reso-

lution to the West Timor refugee crisis (see page 4), and is working to make the framework for U.S. government relations with the soon-to-be-independent country as equitable and beneficial to the East Timorese people as possible (see page 7).

Resolutions supporting the establishment of an international tribunal for East Timor and condemning the Indonesian military and militia violence of 1999 have been introduced in the U.S. Congress. Senate Concurrent Resolution 9 and House Concurrent Resolution 60 urge the administration to actively support

justice for the gross human rights violations committed by the Indonesian military and its militias, a top priority for East Timorese individuals and organizations (see above and page 8). Strong U.S. support for an international tribunal is needed to overcome the "legal limbo" (according to UN Transitional Administration head Sergio de Mello) victims and alleged perpetrators of systematic human rights violations and crimes against humanity have experienced for nearly two years.

In its January 2000 report, the UN Inter-  
*(continued on page 11)*

# About East Timor and the East Timor Action Network

*Estafeta* is the Portuguese word for messenger. In East Timor, it identifies people who, with great courage and ingenuity, carried messages throughout the resistance and civilian underground during the Indonesian occupation.

East Timor is a half-island the size of Massachusetts, 400 miles northwest of Australia. It was a Portuguese colony for four centuries, and its 600,000 people tasted independence following the anti-fascist Portuguese revolution in 1974. But nationhood was short-lived.

On December 7, 1975, Indonesia invaded East Timor after getting the "green light" from President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger. Indonesian armed forces occupied East Timor until October 1999, with essential military and diplomatic support provided by the United States.

Between 1975 and mid-1999, more than 200,000 East Timorese people (one-third of the pre-invasion population) were killed by massacre, forced starvation and disease. Systematic campaigns of rape, murder, torture and arbitrary arrest terrorized the population. Natural resources (including oil, coffee and marble) were pillaged by Indonesian dictator Suharto's military-business complex.

Suharto ruled Indonesia brutally for 32 years (and oversaw genocide in East Timor for 23). But the Indonesian people forced him to resign in 1998, and the Habibie government allowed the East Timorese to vote. On August 30, 1999, after a quarter-century of brutal Indonesian rule, 78.5% of the East Timorese people chose independence.

Following the vote, the Indonesian military and their militias carried out their threats of retaliation. Thousands were killed. More than three-fourths of the people were displaced from their homes, a quarter-million taken forcibly to Indonesia. Most towns and houses in East Timor were leveled.

East Timor is now under a UN-administered transition to nationhood. But around 100,000 people have still not been able to return, and those who have face a mammoth task of reconstructing their country from scratch. Not only must they design their political system, they have to find their families, build their homes, salvage their society, and travel the difficult road from occupation through

aid-dependency to self-sufficiency.

International awareness of the horror of East Timor increased after November 12, 1991, when Indonesian soldiers acting under high-level orders killed more than 270 nonviolent demonstrators at Santa Cruz Cemetery in Dili. Unlike many previous massacres, this one was witnessed by foreign journalists, who documented the incredible courage of the demonstrators — and the horrific inhumanity of the Indonesian army.

The East Timor *Action Network* was created in response to the Dili massacre. ETAN is a grassroots movement of more than 10,000

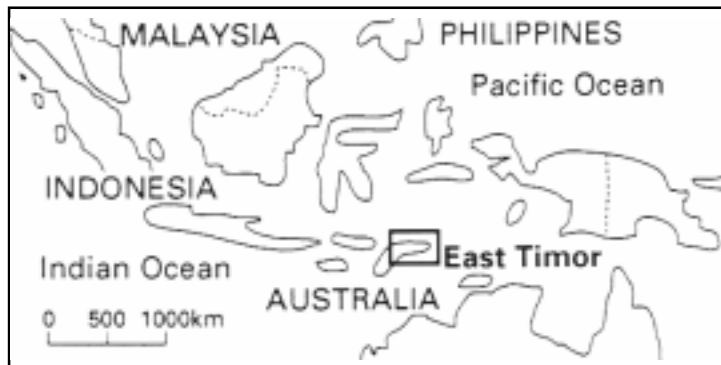
members, with local chapters in 27 cities and states. We have worked for human and political rights for the people of East Timor and for Indonesians who are struggling for democracy in their country.

Since East Timor is now under UN administration on the way to inevitable self-government, ETAN is supporting the transition and working to enhance empowerment, democracy, and development in

East Timor, as well as supporting efforts to advance democracy in Indonesia.

ETAN embraces tactics from public education to protest, lobbying to local organizing, diplomacy to development, resource production to media work. We helped stop U.S. military training aid to Indonesia in 1992, and have maintained limitations on such aid ever since. Our grassroots pressure over the years blocked numerous weapons sales to Indonesia, and President Clinton's belated cutoff of all U.S. military support in September 1999 opened the way for international troops to replace the Indonesian army. We will continue to pressure Indonesia until all East Timorese people have been allowed to return home, the Indonesian army has allowed democracy in areas remaining under its influence, and those responsible for crimes in East Timor from 1975 to 1999 have been held accountable.

ETAN is made up of people just like you who contact their representatives in Washington, protest, and educate others in the community about the situation in East Timor and Indonesia. We survive on your generous donations of time, talent and money. Please join us. And thank you. ■



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# ETAN Conference Launches New Phase of Solidarity

by Diane Farsetta

What should ETAN's mission be now that East Timor is moving towards independence? What new approaches can we take to help achieve justice for East Timor, including a resolution to the refugee crisis? Thirty-six ETAN members from 13 states came to Tempe, Arizona at the end of January to address these and other important questions at ETAN's national strategy meeting.

ETAN National Coordinator Charlie Scheiner and Jill Sternberg, nonviolence and anti-oppression trainer with the Center for Education and Networking in Nonviolent Action, described their recent six-week visit to East Timor. They identified the following areas as needing serious attention: the need for real justice and reconciliation; the continuing refugee crisis in West Timor; problems with international institutions including the United Nations, large aid agencies, and the World Bank in East Timor; and the political transition process by which an East Timorese constitution will be drafted and adopted and a leadership democratically elected. Although there are many problems with the UN transitional administration (see page 1), Charlie and Jill reported a significant sense of relief in East Timor now that the Indonesian military is gone, with East Timorese friends appearing years younger than in 1999.

ETAN's original mission statement focused on the need for East Timorese self-determination, a goal largely achieved in the August 1999 referendum. The new mission statement, developed at the conference and subsequently revised and adopted by ETAN's steering committee, emphasizes ETAN's commitment to human rights and a broad range of



**Longtime ETAN activist Matthew Jardine (center) addresses January's Tempe conference. Also pictured are (left to right) Garrick Ruiz, Karen Orenstein, IHRN representative Kurt Biddle, and Agatha Schmaedick.**

social justice issues (see sidebar below).

Participants decided upon the initiatives of most importance for the coming year:

- The need for an international tribunal for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in East Timor from 1975 through 1999, and the need to hold the U.S. government responsible for its role in the invasion and occupation.
- Raising the political profile of the West Timor refugee crisis, advocating for militia disarming and disbanding, calling for an international presence in the refugee camps and for an internationally-supervised refugee registration, and working to maintain the ban on U.S. military ties with Indonesia.
- Supporting and working with East Timorese non-governmental organizations to address the policies and actions of the

United Nations administration, large international aid agencies, and the World Bank in East Timor. Committees are developing campaign proposals on each of these topics.

Other conference sessions discussed ETAN's national work, grassroots strategies, and coordination with the new Indonesian Human Rights Network (IHRN). Important aspects of ETAN's national-level work include lobbying Congress to support an international tribunal and to maintain the suspension on U.S.-Indonesia military ties. The Lantos/Kennedy "East Timor Transition to Independence Act of 2001" was the subject of much discussion at the conference (see page 7). ETAN and IHRN have been working together on maintaining the ban on U.S.-Indonesia military ties, and will work together for an international tribunal and an end to the West Timor refugee crisis. IHRN will likely take leadership and an increasing share of the work on Indonesia-related issues as the organization develops.

The meeting re-energized participants and reminded us how much ETAN has accomplished, though this of course pales beside the successes and continuing troubles of the East Timorese themselves. Although political independence for East Timor is now virtually guaranteed, we all agreed the people of East Timor need and deserve support from friends in the United States as they work for social, political and economic justice. The East Timor *Action Network* will continue to work in partnership with the people of East Timor to provide such support. ■

## ETAN's New Mission Statement

The East Timor *Action Network*/U.S. (ETAN) is a grassroots human rights organization working in solidarity with the people of East Timor. ETAN supports human dignity for all East Timorese by advocating for women's rights, democracy, sustainable development, sound environmental practices, and comprehensive social, legal, and economic justice. To this end, we work to influence the policies of the United States government and international institutions as they relate to East Timor. The history of U.S. support for Indonesia's illegal invasion and occupation of East Timor underlies ETAN's efforts to achieve accountability for those responsible at home and abroad for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed from 1975 on. ETAN is also motivated by the need for continued vigilance to ensure genuine self-determination for the people of East Timor.

# West Timor Refugee Crisis Continues

by Diane Farsetta

Eighteen months after the vote for independence, up to 100,000 people — approximately one-eighth of the East Timorese population — remain virtual hostages in squalid refugee camps in Indonesian West Timor. A lack of concerted action from the international community, combined with intransigence by the Indonesian military and government, has reduced refugee repatriation to a trickle. Although East Timor is now free of Indonesian troops, East Timorese refugees across the border live under military- and militia-imposed terror. The Center for Internally Displaced Persons, an Indonesian humanitarian organization working in the West Timor camps, recently estimated that five refugees die from disease, malnutrition, and other preventable causes each day.

As part of the September 1999 scorched earth campaign in East Timor, the Indonesian military and its militias moved more than 260,000 people across the border into West Timor, often at gunpoint. Some of those remaining have chosen to stay for financial or other well-informed reasons. But the United Nations, international humanitarian agencies, the East Timorese leadership and other observers agree that the vast majority of refugees would return to East Timor if they could do so in an atmosphere free of fear and intimidation.

One of the main obstacles to resolving the crisis is the continued presence of armed militia in many West Timor camps. Indonesian authorities have been unwilling or unable to disarm militias and arrest those guilty of serious crimes in East and West Timor. Although the Indonesian government has repeatedly promised to disarm the military's proxy killers, their ineffective attempts are largely seen as a token gesture to pacify the international community.

A severe miscarriage of international justice exacerbates the refugee crisis. In January 2000, the UN International Commission of Inquiry on East Timor called for an international tribunal on war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in East Timor. However, more than one year later, no Indonesian military officers or militia leaders have been held accountable for the forced removal of East Timorese from their homeland or for the murders, assaults, rapes and other serious crimes committed in West and East Timor.

There has been almost no international presence in the West Timor

camps since militia members murdered three UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) international workers in Atambua, West Timor on September 6, 2000. While recent announcements that the UNHCR may re-enter West Timor are welcome, the UN has yet to explain how it will handle armed militia gangs or how it will ensure that refugees are able to choose freely between repatriation to East Timor or resettlement within Indonesia. Information from various sources — including the UNHCR's plan to reduce its staff by more than 90 percent and close five of its six offices in East Timor — raise concerns that the UN may be trying to wash its hands of West Timor, even without an acceptable resolution to the refugee crisis.

In early June ETAN will host a speaking tour by Winston Neil Rondo, a humanitarian worker from West Timor, in order to raise the profile of the refugee crisis here and to push the U.S. government to actively work to resolve the ongoing crisis. He is the General Secretary of the Centre for Internally Displaced People's Services (CIS) in Kupang, West Timor. Tour stops will include Los Angeles, Boston, New York, and Washington (where Winston will join activists participating in ETAN's annual lobby days). Contact field organizer Diane Farsetta at [diane@etan.org](mailto:diane@etan.org) or 608-663-5431.



Karen Orenstein

## “The problem of East Timor is not solved yet.”

As “Jane Doe” took the stand in Washington in her lawsuit against Indonesian General Lumintang (see page 6), she was asked why she wished to remain anonymous. Her simple reply: “The problem of East Timor is not solved yet.”

The East Timor *Action Network* continues to work for real solutions; to bring the refugees home, to hold accountable those responsible for gross human rights violations, and to ensure the U.S. and international influences in East Timor are a help, and not a hindrance, to democratic development.

Dissident, MIT Professor of Linguistics and long-time supporter of East Timor Noam Chomsky recently wrote ETAN that “It’s really inspiring to watch what you’ve been doing, and to see

that you are still at it, in full vigor. Couldn’t agree with you more about the urgent necessity of keeping the issues alive here.” Please give generously so that Jane Doe and thousands like her can rebuild their country in peace.

*Send your contribution today.* Donations of any size for ETAN’s political and advocacy work should be made out to ETAN, and are not tax-deductible. Tax-deductible checks over \$50 can be made out to “WESPAC Foundation” and will be used to support our educational work; both should be mailed to ETAN’s White Plains office.

Thank you for your support.



# U.S. Activists Respond to Indonesian Military Violence

## Kick-Off Conference Launches Indonesia Human Rights Network

by Kurt Biddle

The Indonesian military is out of control. Just one example is in Aceh, the area on the northern-most tip of the Indonesian island of Sumatra. On March 29, two human rights activists and their driver were found shot dead. The three men were killed after leaving a South Aceh police station, where one of them was summoned for questioning in a defamation case involving police. The killings are only the latest in which the Indonesian military and police have been implicated.

In response to growing violence by Indonesian security forces, almost 200 activists, academics and human rights advocates from Indonesia, Australia, Europe, the U.S. and elsewhere gathered in Washington, DC February 23 - 25 to attend the kick-off conference of the Indonesia Human Rights Network.

Entitled "Indonesia: A Human Rights Agenda," the conference featured workshops, panel discussions and strategy sessions on topics including Indonesian politics and economics, grassroots activism and Washington advocacy.

Among the many speakers were Hendardi of the Jakarta-based Indonesian Legal Aid and Human Rights Association (PBHI), Liem Soei Liong from the London-based organization Tapol, Charles Scheiner, National Coordinator of the East Timor *Action* Network, Jeffrey Winters of Northwestern University and Sidney Jones of Human Rights Watch/Asia.

Participants prioritized three national campaigns for IHRN:

- Working to support civilian control of the Indonesian military by strengthening the current ban on U.S. military training and weapons shipments;
- Generating support for rule of law by assisting judicial reform and pressing for an international tribunal to prosecute those respon-

sible for crimes against humanity committed in East Timor;

- Advocating for assistance for international and Indonesian non-governmental workers, and for an international presence to help deter further human rights violations in conflict areas.

Ideas considered for regional campaigns included speaking tours, teach-ins, and coalition work with the anti-sweatshop movement.

After the conference IHRN released a statement urging the Bush administration to "to stand strongly in support of Indonesian democratization and to maintain and strengthen the current ban on U.S. aid to the Indonesian military."

Cut Zahara, sister of IHRN founding member Jafar Siddiq Hamzah, dedicated the conference to her brother's memory. Jafar was an Acehnese human rights lawyer who was disappeared, tortured and killed last year in North Sumatra [see last *Estafeta*]. Jafar founded the New York-based International Forum for Aceh.

Human rights activists created the Indonesia Human Rights Network last year to support Indonesians struggling for democracy. ETAN initiated the framework for IHRN and continues to provide office space and other support. IHRN strives to break the power of the Indonesian military by working to deny it international support, thus freeing up the peoples of Indonesia to make their own economic and political choices. IHRN supports worker's rights, promotes monitoring of the World Bank and IMF, and opposes violence and discrimination against minority racial, ethnic, and religious groups, women and sexual minorities.

If you are interested in the Indonesia Human Rights Network you can learn more by visiting [www.IndonesiaNetwork.org](http://www.IndonesiaNetwork.org) or calling 202-546-0044. ■

*Kurt Biddle is an Executive Board Member of the Indonesia Human Rights Network.*

## Support East Timor in Your Community

. For more information or to share your experiences, contact field organizer Diane Farsetta or visit ETAN's website at [www.etan.org](http://www.etan.org).

Call your U.S. Senators and Congressperson (see action alert, p. 8). Pass out leaflets at local events urging others to do the same.

When you read or hear a news story on East Timor, Indonesia, or related issues, write or call to encourage coverage of the issue, and to point out any important omissions. Stress connections between military atrocities in Indonesia and the need for an international tribunal in East Timor, or between the refugee crisis in West Timor and the need for those who committed or directed serious crimes, including murder and rape, in both East and West Timor to be brought to justice. Describe the upcoming elections in East Timor and the need for the UN transitional administration to adequately consult with East Timorese. Ask to meet with local editorial boards to educate them on East Timor and Indonesia.

Educate others about East Timor at your local school, community center, or place of worship by speaking, showing a documentary, or hosting an outside speaker (at universities and other institutions, honoraria can be donated to ETAN).

Organize a house party or benefit concert to support ETAN.

Meet with your Congressional representatives or aides in-district and/or in Washington, D.C. during ETAN's June lobby days.

Commemorate upcoming significant dates in East Timor's history with editorials, vigils, protests, or local letter-writing or call-in days: May 5, the anniversary of the 1999 agreement which set up the U.N. referendum; August 30, the anniversary of the 1999 vote for independence; November 12, the anniversary of the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre.

# Indonesian General on Trial in U.S. Court

by John M. Miller

In late March 2001, an Indonesian general was finally brought to the bar of justice for military-directed violence committed before, during and after East Timor's 1999 vote on independence. General Johny Lumintang served as deputy chief of staff of the Indonesian army during that ballot period; the hearing examining his role in the scorched earth repression took place in a federal court in Washington, DC.

The civil lawsuit alleged that Lumintang was responsible for gross human rights violations and crimes against humanity in East Timor. For two and half days, Judge Alan Kay received an extensive education, via victims' personal accounts and expert testimony, on East Timor's history and the enormous suffering perpetrated by the Indonesian military.

While Lumintang's actions were on trial, so were those of the Indonesian military command of which he was an important part. Similarly, the harrowing stories told by the three East Timorese plaintiffs who traveled to the U.S. to testify, while unique, were representative of the suffering of hundreds of thousands of others in 1999.

These plaintiffs — who, still in fear of Indonesian military reprisals, chose to remain anonymous — were referred to as Jane and John Does in court. Jane Doe I's son was murdered by the Indonesian military after being separated from his family a week after the August 30 independence vote. Jane Doe I was forced on a harrowing trip to West Timor and returned to find her home destroyed for the second time in over two decades (the first was during Indonesia's invasion of East Timor in 1975).

John Doe II, along with 100,000 other Dili residents, fled into the hills after the ballot to escape military and militia violence. Days later, he ventured into the destroyed city of Dili to look for food. Indonesian soldiers stopped him as he returned with scavenged biscuits, beat him and shot him in the leg. Forced to crawl a long distance for help, he eventually lost his foot as no medical attention was available for several weeks and it had to be amputated.

John Doe III recounted threats he and his activist family endured for years. Police told them they would be harmed if they participated in resistance demonstrations, and that pro-independence Timorese would be

killed if their position prevailed in the ballot. He and his father (testifying via video tape) then described the military attack on his family home and of how his brother (John Doe V) was brutally tortured and killed.

A militia member who participated in that killing wrote to the father describing how John Doe V was shot in his legs and stabbed as soldiers demanded that he reveal the location of family members. His throat was then cut and his body further mutilated and burned. John Doe III read from the letter, which praised John Doe V's bravery as he sacrificed for the sake of his family by refusing to reveal their location; the militiaman's letter gave the location of the victim's body. John Doe III tearfully described how several hundred people from his village watched as the family and U.N. police exhumed the grave. Only a handful of bones, ashes and John Doe V's wallet were recovered.

Expert witness Professor Richard Tanter gave an overview of East Timor's history, focusing on Indonesia's invasion and subsequent occupation. Tanter described in detail the Indonesian army's command structure, as well as Lumintang's responsibilities in the chain of command.

Tanter also explained the significance of two documents entered into evidence that were signed by General Lumintang. The first, a telegram to senior military figures responsible for East Timor dated May 5, the day the agreement to conduct the vote was signed, contains an order to implement "repressive/coercive measures" and a plan to "move to the rear/evacuate if the second option [independence] is chosen." The second, a Kopassus special forces training manual, advises the use of terror, kidnapping and sabotage against opponents.

Tanter described how other documents confirmed the army's role in planning, promoting and carrying out the massive destruction, killings, deportations and other rights abuses that took place during and after the referendum process.

Although Indonesian military spokespersons claimed that Lumintang was not properly notified of the suit, he was personally served on March 30, 2000, while he was preparing to leave Washington after speaking before the U.S.-Indonesia Society and at the National Defense University. Judge Gladys Kessler found him in default in December after he failed to answer the suit. This year's



hearing was to determine the amount of compensatory damages for the plaintiffs' suffering and the amount of punitive damages.

In summation, attorney Steven M. Schneebaum urged a large judgment to send a strong signal not just to General Lumintang and Indonesian military officials, but to anyone tempted to commit similar crimes in other places.

## Background

Following the August 30, 1999 UN-organized referendum, the Indonesian military systematically destroyed East Timor, murdering at least 1500 East Timorese and destroying 70-80 percent of the infrastructure. Hundreds of thousands were forced from their homes. UN and Indonesian human rights investigators in separate reports introduced into evidence clearly placed responsibility for this systematic campaign of terror on Indonesian military commanders.

General Lumintang, who currently serves as secretary general of the Ministry of Defense, was trained by the United States under the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program. In response to public outrage over massacres in East Timor and ETAN organizing, Congress has limited Indonesia's participation in this program since 1992. Proponents of IMET argue that such training inculcates respect for human rights.

This lawsuit builds on U.S. court precedents including a successful suit against Indonesian General Sintong Panjaitan for his involvement in the Nov. 12, 1991 Santa Cruz massacre of more than 270 East Timorese. In 1994, a federal court in Boston awarded \$14 million to Helen Todd, the mother of the only non-East Timorese killed at Santa Cruz.

The Lumintang lawsuit, like the Panjaitan

case, is based in part on the Alien Tort Claims Act of 1789 which allows non-citizens to sue for acts committed outside the United States "in violation of the law of nations or a treaty of the United States." The 1992 Torture Victim Protection Act restates the 1789 law and applies it to torture victims. Lawsuits can only

go forward if the defendant is served legal papers in the U.S.

Counsel for the case include the Center for Constitutional Rights, the Center for Justice and Accountability and the law firm of Patton, Boggs. ETAN supported the lawsuit to help ensure that those responsible for the

Indonesian military devastation of East Timor are called to account and to put future rights abusers on notice.

For more information about the Lumintang and Panjaitan cases, visit [www.etan.org/news/2000a/11suit.htm](http://www.etan.org/news/2000a/11suit.htm). ■

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# U.S. - East Timor Relationship Raises New Questions

by *Charles Scheiner*

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Sometime next year, East Timor will be independent. As East Timor grapples with the challenges of nation-building, the United States is solidifying its ties to the newest member of the international community. The process raises many questions for both countries, and for ETAN and other supporters of the East Timorese people.

Since 1991, ETAN has supported East Timorese human rights, including the right to self-determination. We campaigned against U.S. support for the repressive Suharto regime, working in solidarity with the East Timorese resistance, both in exile and in East Timor, as they struggled to end the Indonesian occupation. The East Timorese people won their independence, and ETAN is proud to have been a part of that effort.

As East Timor evolves from occupied territory to nation, many East Timorese leaders and activists we work with are becoming government officials. This shift involves new responsibilities and constraints, as diplomatic and political considerations require cooperative relationships, even with former enemies. At the same time, a new generation of East Timorese activist non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is emerging, part of a vibrant civil society. Although ETAN maintains friendly relationships with political leaders, our natural partners are the educators, agitators, advocates and organizers who do in their country what we do in ours.

As U.S. activists with a critical analysis of our country's global agenda, ETAN is analyzing proposed ties between our government and East Timor's transitional and future administrations. Politicians in the U.S. and East Timor are looking for a relationship similar to those the U.S. has with other nations, but activists in both countries dream of better possibilities. We seek a non-militarized, economically just, ecologically sustainable

way for East Timor to survive in a world increasingly dominated by global "free-market" forces. Although the ideal may seem unattainable, so was independence for East Timor when ETAN formed in 1991.

## Transition to Independence Act

East Timor's allies in Congress are unwittingly clarifying the issues. Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Representative Tom Lantos (D-CA) and 38 others have sponsored the East Timor Transition to Independence Act (HR 675/S 375), outlining the United States-East Timor relationship for the next three years. When he introduced the bill in February, Rep. Lantos (ranking Democrat on the House International Relations Committee) said:

"This bill outlines a trade, aid, and security agenda enabling the people of East Timor to fulfill their dream of democratic self-governance. Having helped deliver the people of East Timor from repressive rule, America has a responsibility - and a strong national interest - in finishing the job of building democracy."

Although some may differ over whether "America" helped deliver East Timor from or into Indonesian repression, the United States and East Timor will have an economic and political relationship, and we need to understand its ramifications.

The 17-page bill (available at [www.etan.org/legislation](http://www.etan.org/legislation)) authorizes the U.S. government to fund and establish projects and ties with UNTAET and, after independence, with East Timor's government. ETAN offered numerous suggestions as the bill was drafted; some were accepted, some were not.

We support positive aspects of the bill, including the establishment of a U.S. diplomatic mission in East Timor, \$1 million annually in scholarships for East Timorese to study in the United States, and backing for an international tribunal. The East Timorese people struggled hard to become independent, and it

is appropriate for the United States to deal with them as a nation. But the United States has an unbalanced relationship with nearly every country in the world. Although we should not hold East Timor hostage to global inequities, some aspects of the proposed U.S.-East Timor relationship are problematic. Many ETAN members and East Timorese NGOs oppose them on principled grounds. The following is an overview, ask ETAN if you would like a more thorough analysis.

## Military Ties

The East Timor Transition to Independence Act would authorize surplus weapons and International Military Education and Training (IMET) for the East Timor Defense Force (ETDF). The assistance must be "in the national security interests of the United States" and "promote both human rights and the professionalization of the armed forces of East Timor."

Many ETAN activists came to work on East Timor because U.S. military support made us complicit in Indonesia's occupation. For thirty years, the U.S. aided Suharto's army as they killed at least a million Indonesians and one-third of the East Timorese population. Between 1975 and 1997, the United States shipped \$1.2 billion worth of weapons to Indonesia. U.S. taxpayers hosted 2,600 Indonesian soldiers under IMET until 1991, and thousands more were secretly trained by U.S. soldiers in Indonesia until 1998.

Looking worldwide, we cannot find a single case where U.S. weapons or military training helped human rights, democracy, or the rule of law. There is no reason to expect East Timor to be different. When we challenged U.S. patronage of Suharto's troops, we argued that the Pentagon's record should disqualify it from training anyone, anywhere. U.S. military training, for example at the School of the Americas, supports repression. Much of what is taught

*(continued on page 8)*

# ACTION ALERT

## SUPPORT SECURITY & JUSTICE FOR EAST TIMOR

*With a new administration in Washington, now is an excellent time to raise East Timor and Indonesia with returning and newly-elected Senators and Congresspeople, and Bush administration officials.*

### The U.S. Should Not Support Indonesia's Military

The current suspension of all military ties must be maintained at least until: the West Timor refugee crisis is resolved (up to 100,000 East Timorese remain in Indonesia, many victimized by military-backed militia, see p. 4); the Indonesian civilian government is in full control of the military; Indonesian military members are held accountable for committing, planning, or otherwise being complicit in human rights violations committed in East Timor and elsewhere.

### The U.S. Must Call for an International Tribunal

The U.S. should fully support an international tribunal on East Timor to prosecute Indonesian and other military, militia and civilians responsible for systematic human rights abuses and crimes against humanity in East Timor since 1975.

#### Current co-sponsors of Senate Concurrent Resolution 9 and House Concurrent Resolution 60 include:

##### Senate Concurrent Resolution 9

Tom Harkin (D-IA)	Patrick Leahy (D-VT)
Russell Feingold (D-WI)	John Reed (D-RI)
Ted Kennedy (D-MA)	Paul Wellstone (D-MN)
Herbert Kohl (D-WI)	

##### House Concurrent Resolution 60

Robert E. Andrews (D-NJ)	Dennis J. Kucinich (D-OH)
Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)	Tom Lantos (D-CA)
Sherrod Brown (D-OH)	Nita M. Lowey (D-NY)
Michael E. Capuano (D-MA)	James P. McGovern (D-MA)
William D. Delahunt (D-MA)	Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC)
Lane Evans (D-IL)	Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)
Eni F. H. Faleomavaega (D-AS)	Bobby L. Rush (D-IL)
Barney Frank (D-MA)	Fortney Pete Stark (D-CA)
Joseph M. Hoeffel (D-PA)	Mark Udall (D-CO)
Marcy Kaptur (D-OH)	Henry A. Waxman (D-CA)
Patrick J. Kennedy (D-RI)	Anthony D. Weiner (D-NY)
Mark Steven Kirk (R-IL)	Frank R. Wolf (R-VA)

*(U.S.-East Timor ties, cont. from page 7)*  
has no place in any civilized country. Although some East Timorese leaders are softening their positions, ETAN unequivocally opposes any U.S. military support for Indonesia until all officials responsible for crimes in East Timor are held accountable and the Indonesian military ceases to be a repressive force.

The East Timor Defense Force, derived from the FALINTIL guerrilla army, has a strong record of discipline and respect for human rights. FALINTIL's restraint during the 1999

military/militia terror was exemplary, and could teach much to U.S. soldiers. The Pentagon has nothing to offer the ETDF that will benefit East Timor's population or national security, especially since the United Nations peacekeepers will continue to provide border security after independence.

The bill also authorizes U.S. law enforcement agencies, including the FBI and DEA, to assist East Timor's justice system. Since East Timor has no significant drug problem, there is no need for the DEA. The FBI has a history

of civil liberties violations which render it unworthy of export to East Timor.

#### Economic entanglement

The bill authorizes \$30 million annually in bilateral and multilateral aid and \$2 million/year in Peace Corps funding. These programs will benefit East Timor, but their main purposes are funding U.S. businesses and advancing the image of the United States. East Timor has primary responsibility to accept, reject or

*(continued on page 9)*

#### Call or write the President, Secretary of State and Congress

Tell them to support human rights and democracy in East Timor and Indonesia by maintaining a complete ban on U.S.-Indonesia military ties.

- President George W. Bush via the White House comment line at 202-456-1111; president@whitehouse.gov

- Secretary of State Colin Powell at 202-647-5291 or 202-647-6434 (fax); secretary@state.gov

- Call the congressional switchboard (202-224-3121) and ask for your Senator or Representative's office and ask for the foreign policy aide, or consult [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov) for fax or e-mail information.

#### Contact your Senators and Representatives

Urge them to support congressional resolutions calling for an international tribunal for crimes against humanity committed in East Timor: House Concurrent Resolution 60 and Senate Concurrent Resolution 9, Condemning the Violence in East Timor and Urging the Establishment of an International War Crimes Tribunal for Prosecuting Crimes Against Humanity That Occurred During That Conflict.

When he introduced the Senate version of the resolution, Senator Harkin observed, "wherever and whenever conflict has resulted in great bloodshed, human suffering, and destruction, there has been no real peace established without real justice. The people of East Timor deserve peace — and to establish peace, we must first seek justice."

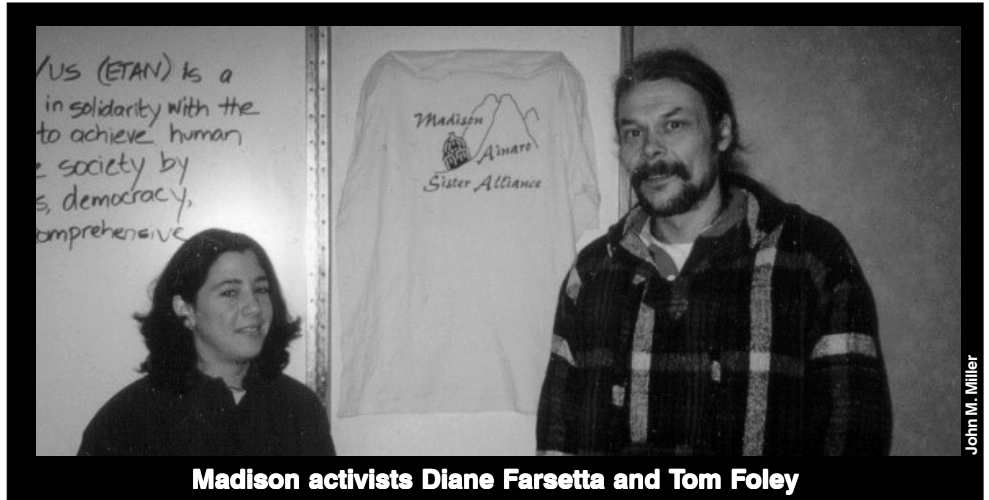
See ETAN's website ([www.etan.org/legislation](http://www.etan.org/legislation)) for a current list of co-sponsors and updates on this and other important legislation.

# Madison Becomes East Timor's First Sister City in U.S.

by Diane Farsetta

On Tuesday, February 20th, the city council of Madison, Wisconsin voted unanimously in favor of an official sister relationship with Ainaro, East Timor. In doing so, Madison became the first U.S. sister city of an East Timorese community. Those speaking in favor of the resolution included East Timor native Natércia Godhino-Adams and lead co-sponsor Alderwoman Barbara Vedder.

In Ainaro, a town in the mountainous southwest of the country, the Indonesian military-backed militia were numerous and ruthless in 1999. Ninety-five percent of all buildings, including the only hospital and all the town's schools, was destroyed following the vote for independence. Godhino-Adams said, "I saw almost no buildings with roofs" during a July 2000 visit. During a joint East Timorese-ETAN countrywide assessment in early 2000, residents of Ainaro shared their vision of their town's future, including agricultural cooperatives, women's organizations, and revitalized health care and educational systems. They concluded by inviting international friends to join them in a sistering relationship. Madison's first envoy to Ainaro, Jen Laakso,



Madison activists Diane Farsetta and Tom Foley

spent several weeks there in the summer of 2000, found great enthusiasm for the sister city project from "pretty much everyone I talked to."

Sistering provides a direct grassroots-to-grassroots relationship which is empowering and beneficial for both communities. "What the people of Madison can offer the people of Ainaro," said Godhino-Adams, "is the consistency of the sister relationship. Madison, in turn, can learn much from Ainaro's culture and experiences." Members of the

Madison-Ainaro Sister Alliance are now planning their first delegation to East Timor. One possible delegation project Laakso found wide support for in Ainaro is building a community workspace and tool lending library, a project headed by Alliance member and woodworker Tom Foley. Information on all of Madison's East Timor-related activism can be found on the web at <http://www.aideasttimor.org>.

For more information on sistering projects, contact Diane Farsetta at [diane@etan.org](mailto:diane@etan.org) or 608-663-5431. ■

(U.S.-East Timor ties, cont. from page 8)

modify aid to suit its needs. ETAN, together with La'o Hamutuk and other East Timorese NGOs, can inform about the intentions and consequences of such programs, facilitate East Timorese learning from other countries, and try to influence our government. Despite our reservations, there are no alternatives for this level of funding.

Economic injustices perpetrated in the name of "free trade," exploitation of the resources and labor of poorer countries to benefit corporations and wealthy individuals in the United States and other rich nations, are facilitated by most U.S. aid and trade policies, including those in this bill. Our planet does not contain a small, underdeveloped country which enjoys a fair and mutually beneficial economic relationship with the United States; the unbalanced match makes it hard to say no to United States political, military and economic power. Like every small country, East Timor will need imports and therefore be part

of the global economy. Consequently, East Timor will trade with the U.S., and that trade should be scrutinized for its impact on the East Timorese people.

The bill includes mechanisms to encourage U.S. investment and trade, including the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), the Trade and Development Agency, the Export-Import Bank, Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) tariff waivers and a bilateral investment treaty. These provide subsidies (risk insurance, loans or reduced tariffs) for U.S. investors in East Timor.

Progressive U.S. activists opposed some

of these programs for Indonesia to pressure for improved labor and environmental rights. Denying these programs for East Timor would, in effect, impose sanctions to protest entrenched U.S. pro-corporate policies. Rather, we can help this benefit the East Timorese by working for equitable, sustainable, appropriate, and environmentally sound models that respect labor, human and women's rights.

As East Timor attains independence, ETAN will work with East Timorese NGOs to make the United States' relationship with the new nation as fair and generous as possible. It is a complex and difficult challenge.

## New Book Describes East Timor Independence Process

"Bitter Flowers, Sweet Flowers: East Timor, Indonesia, and the World Community"

Edited by Richard Tanter, Mark Selden, and Stephen R. Shalom

A comprehensive collection on the referendum process and prospects for East Timor's independence, with chapters by analysts and first-hand participants. Authors include:

Allan Nairn, Constâncio Pinto, Charles Scheiner, and Noam Chomsky

Paperback from ETAN, \$20 (20% off list price) plus postage.

(Justice, cont. from page 1)

nor have any indictments been handed down. Indonesia amended its constitution to make it almost impossible to convict military officers for past crimes or for command responsibility. Indonesia refused to cooperate with UNTAET, whose investigators have traveled to Jakarta several times. Witnesses — including military officers and notorious militia leader Eurico Guterres — refused to answer questions. Although UNTAET shares information with Indonesian prosecutors, endangering East Timorese who testified in confidence, Jakarta has not reciprocated. According to the U.S. State Department Human Rights Report on Indonesia for 2000, “The Government has not prosecuted any persons in connection with the militia-related crimes in West or East Timor dating back to 1999, although the Attorney General in September and October named 23 persons as suspects in East Timor human rights cases.” At press time, five months later, there is still no progress.

Since the Indonesian system perpetuates impunity, ETAN is calling on the United States and other nations to create an international tribunal to try those responsible for serious human rights abuses and crimes against humanity in East Timor since 1975. This was the number one priority of the East Timorese NGOs I met with in December and January, and is also ETAN’s highest goal.

Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), Representative Lane Evans (D-OH) and others have introduced a concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 9 / H. Con. Res. 60) calling for the United States to “endorse and support the establishment of an international criminal tribunal for the purpose of prosecuting culpable Indonesian military and police officers and personnel, leaders of local militias and paramilitary organizations, and other individuals who are responsible for crimes against humanity in East Timor, including systematic murder, rape, and terrorism, the unlawful use of force, and crimes against United Nations personnel deployed in East Timor and in the refugee camps of West Timor.” This resolution is non-binding, but it is an important tool to reinvigorate calls for a tribunal.

### **Is the Crimes Unit Serious?**

UNTAET has established a “Serious Crimes Unit” to investigate and prosecute murder, rape and other major offenses in East Timor. It is focusing on a few high-profile crimes from 1999, but many doubt the SCU can even successfully pursue those. The unit is inadequately funded and staffed, and

plagued with mismanagement and incompetence which leads many to doubt its seriousness of purpose.

A delusion based on a distorted view of East Timor’s history pervades UNTAET and many foreign governments and journalists. It has three main elements: (1) forget everything which occurred before January 1999, (2) grant de facto amnesty (by amnesia, insufficient political will, or incompetence) to Indonesia and other governments who committed, directed or supported crimes against East Timor, and (3) blame an alleged East Timorese “culture of violence” for human rights violations and atrocities. UNTAET’s Serious Crimes Unit exemplifies this perspective.

I attended the first day of Serious Crimes trials, January 10 in Dili District Court. The defendant, 22-year old militia member João Fernandes, pled guilty to premeditated, deliberate murder of village chief Domingos Gonçalves Pereira in Maliana on September 8, 1999. The killing was part of an organized attack by the *Dadarus Merah Putih* militia which took dozens of lives.

The trial featured inadequate translation, inexperienced defense attorneys, arrogant foreign prosecutors, and poor process. The presiding judge, from Italy, seemed to have little interest in the organized nature of the crime; the judge from Burundi said nothing. The East Timorese judge, Natércia Gusmão, urged that the defendant be charged with crimes against humanity, but her colleagues outvoted her, resulting in an indictment for simple murder. On the third court date (the second adjourned for lack of an interpreter), the prosecution requested 10 years because the defendant was cooperative. On January 25, the judges handed down 12 years. On March 1, João Fernandes sawed through the roof of his cell and escaped. He is probably in Indonesia, and prosecutors fear he may pass on damaging information to his militia colleagues.

The under-resourced judicial system is fraught with problems. The SCU seems oblivious to systematic military execution of the 1999 destruction, failing to develop cases or obtain Indonesian cooperation against Indonesian military officers. As East Timor moves toward nationhood, it will need to look further than Dili or Jakarta for examples of a system based on the rule of law.

### **Reconciliation without justice**

UNTAET is rapidly moving to implement a “Truth, Reconciliation and Reception Commission” (TRRC) that is of limited utility. Al-

though one of the consultants for this project is a former executive of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, there are major differences between the two. One similarity is the scale: both are projected to have around 300 staff people, a huge project for a country as small as East Timor.

The TRRC will have two principal tasks. The first is to take testimony from victims of crimes committed between 1974 and 1999, and to prepare a report on these crimes. Although the report will probably not explore the chain of command (the Commission is not likely to obtain military documents or testimony from Indonesian sources), it will document the scale and horror of Indonesia’s occupation, including but not limited to the post-ballot destruction.

The more controversial Reconciliation component is limited to people not accused of serious crimes (rape, murder, systematic multiple arson) who choose to live in East Timor. If the prosecutor’s office decides they are eligible for the TRRC process, they can confess their crimes and be given a restorative sentence (such as rebuilding a house they destroyed), after which it is hoped that their community will forgive them. This restorative justice is modeled on traditional East Timorese custom, and is an attempt to compensate for the impossibility of handling tens of thousands of cases via the judicial system. This process, which UNTAET is rushing to set up during the transition rather than allowing an independent East Timor to design its own process, aims to encourage low-level militia and pro-integration people to return from West Timor, with the assumption that the Reconciliation process will dissuade villagers from inflicting vigilante justice.

But most East Timorese are amazingly willing to welcome even those who committed mayhem (under Indonesian military direction) home. Even most militia leaders would be accepted, provided they acknowledge the vote for independence. The East Timorese know who ravaged their country — and are frustrated by ineffective attempts to hold Indonesian military officers accountable. Of the 175,000 who have returned from West Timor, only a few dozen have been harassed or assaulted. Although militias killed thousands and burned most of East Timor’s buildings in 1999, only four returnees have been killed in retaliation, all before April 2000.

The fear which keeps many of the 100,000 refugees still in West Timor from returning is inculcated by armed militias whose propaganda, threats and violence mislead the refu-

gees about what they would face in East Timor (see page 4). The TRRC, whatever its merits, will not end the disinformation.

### Quotidian Justice

Justice is not only achieved in the courts. It should be present in day-to-day interactions between the powerful and the powerless members of society. In this regard, the UN Transitional Administration fails badly. After more than a year of sovereignty over East Timor, UNTAET has learned little. Many of the international staff of the UN and other large institutions and agencies in East Timor are racist, sexist, rushed and arrogant. They don't care to learn the language, history, culture, needs or desires of the people they are ruling, and don't bother to ask the population for direction or ideas. Although there are exceptions to this generalization, those who fit the pattern are ubiquitous and reappear on every large UN mission. The problems have systemic causes.

UN workers, hopping from one trouble spot to another, give loyalty to the mission; their priority is their career. Many have six-month contracts, and almost all will be gone when independence comes in early 2002. They rush to complete tasks before they leave and do not think about who will do the work after they are gone.

The UN brought 180 international workers to East Timor to canvass households for a

“civic registration” database. Though called “volunteers”, these foreigners are paid many times what it would cost to hire an East Timorese worker who would do a better job and still be around next year. Foreign workers don't know the language, geography, or people, and can't find their way around. Given the 80% unemployment rate for East Timorese, this is outrageous.

UNTAET international staff make 50 times as much as East Timorese doing the same jobs. The UN says low East Timorese wages — usually less than \$10 a day — are necessary so that East Timorese workers don't become accustomed to a lifestyle which cannot continue after the UN leaves. But prices have tripled because international staffers make \$300 a day or more. A new economy has developed to soak up this excess cash — container and cruise ship hotels, car rentals, cell phones, satellite TV, restaurants, weekends in Bali — dominated by expatriate Australians who will take their profits home when the UN departs. Little of the money stays in East Timor, and no permanent or sustainable development results. For example, the UN imports millions of plastic water bottles from Indonesia — filling the streets with litter — but potable water systems haven't been repaired. Most other infrastructure (roads, electricity, telephones, houses, commercial buildings not used by the UN) remains as devastated as in September 1999, after TNI and

its militias burned 75% of the country.

UNTAET recently directed its local and international personnel not to talk with anyone outside the mission about anything relating to East Timor. This is not the first example of a culture of secrecy in the transitional authority: UN staffers have been threatened with dismissal for discussing the reasons for Dili's electricity being off more than half the time (there are random blackouts in different neighborhoods; apparently the UN didn't budget enough money for diesel fuel).

UNTAET is mandated to prepare East Timor for independence and should be “helping, not doing” as they train East Timorese to take over their jobs. But UN staffers are used to working in disaster areas, with ostensibly helpless victims of war and catastrophe. They do not see East Timorese people as triumphant in a long and often heroic struggle against a neighbor 200 times their size.

*La'o Hamutuk*, ETAN and others are pushing UNTAET to understand and avoid the most egregious aspects of international behavior, and to see how they can be a part of the solution, rather than the problem.

Eventually, East Timor will triumph over the damage wrought by UNTAET, its fourth foreign occupation in 60 years. But is this an appropriate legacy for the international community to leave its newest member? ■

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### *(Legislative Update, cont. from page 1)*

national Commission of Inquiry on East Timor called for an international tribunal, saying 1999's violence “would not have been possible without the active involvement of the Indonesian army, and the knowledge and approval of the top military command.” ETAN strongly believes that the scope of the tribunal should not be limited to 1999, but should include crimes going back to the 1975 Indonesian military invasion of East Timor. Although Indonesia's parliament has finally passed legislation establishing a human rights court for East Timor, there remain many opportunities for opponents to block or slow its actual formation. ETAN is concerned that trials in Indonesian courts will fail to provide justice because many East Timorese victims and witnesses are too terrified to testify in Indonesia and Indonesian courts remain notoriously corrupt, among other reasons.

The current U.S. Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, which remains in effect until the end of September 2001, bans U.S.

support for the Indonesian military under the International Military Education and Training and Foreign Military Financing programs until specific conditions are met. These include the Indonesian government taking measures to bring military and militia members guilty of human rights violations to justice, cooperating with investigations of the military and militias, and allowing refugees to return to East Timor.

At our national strategy meeting, ETAN reiterated its opposition to U.S. military relations with Indonesia. In a joint statement, ETAN and the newly-formed Indonesia Hu-

Ask your Senators to co-sponsor the Feingold/Chafee IMET Accountability Act (S.647), which would require the Pentagon and State Department to report on allegations that graduates of U.S. military training were involved in human rights violations.

man Rights Network (see page 5) stated that “since the Indonesian military continues to promote conflict and operate largely with impunity, the U.S. should not provide any training, equipment or other support.” ETAN and other nongovernmental organizations made these points to Secretary of State Colin Powell in a letter sent prior to the recent U.S. visit of Indonesian Foreign Minister Alwi Shihab.

Jakarta and some Bush administration officials, notably Assistant Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, are eager to restore U.S.-Indonesian military ties. ETAN and IHRN will work to maintain and expand the military ban, which is crucial to security for East Timor and democratic reform in Indonesia. This year's Foreign Operations Appropriations bill should continue similar or stronger conditions on U.S. military cooperation with Indonesia. The appropriations bill must also contain adequate money for reconstruction in still-demolished East Timor and scholarship opportunities for East Timorese students to study in the U.S.

Thanks for your continued support. *A luta continua!* ■

# Come to ETAN's Lobby Days June 9-12

This June, join activists from across the U.S. for updates on East Timor, lobbying training, and meetings with your elected representatives. In-person meetings are the most effective way to have your voice heard, and there are many important actions

the U.S. can and should take regarding East Timor, including: supporting an international tribunal on East Timor, pressuring the Indonesian government and the United Nations for an acceptable resolution to the West Timor refugee crisis, and maintaining

the ban on U.S.-Indonesia military ties.

If you are interested in attending, or for more information, contact Washington representative Karen Orenstein at [karen@etan.org](mailto:karen@etan.org) or 202-544-6911, or check ETAN's website at <http://www.etan.org>.

## Community Empowerment in Theory and Practice

by Charles Scheiner

One of the largest projects in East Timor is the Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project (CEP), administered by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. CEP is spending \$22.5 million from the Trust Fund (aid to East Timor from bilateral and multilateral donors) over 30 months, primarily in block grants for local community development and reconstruction projects. (For a more detailed description and analysis of the project, see *La'o Hamutuk Bulletin* Vol. 1, No. 4 at [www.etan.org/lh](http://www.etan.org/lh)) One of CEP's stated objectives is to empower rural East Timorese by creating village and subdistrict councils to decide what to fund in each village. I attended a CEP *Concelho do Posto* (subdistrict council) in January in Uatolari, a town on the south coast in Viqueque District. At this meeting, unpaid representatives (one man and one woman) from each *Conselho do Suco* (village council) presented proposals for the second round of CEP funding. The *posto* had \$75,000 to allocate, and will fund about half of the 2-4 projects proposed by each *suco*.

One of CEP's goals is to involve women and men equally, which is difficult in traditional Timorese society. At the meeting I attended, the two CEP staff who facilitated the meeting were East Timorese women, as were half of those attending. But the facilitators failed to empower the council members — as they collected and summarized each proposal, the facilitators did almost all the talking. They then announced the members of the committee would evaluate each proposal and report to the next *Concelho do Posto* meeting. Although these names had been nominated from each *suco*, the staff announced the all-male committee, and some on the *Concelho* objected to some of the nominees.

When *suco* representatives spoke, the men dominated. Many participants appeared not to understand the CEP's many-step decision-making process, although they had already gone through one round of proposals and funding. The whole local governance structure seemed fragile; it probably won't last after this cycle, since CEP will no longer pay facilitators or fund projects.

Toward the end of the meeting, there was a vehement discussion about foreign currency

exchange rates. It emerged that a few of the *Concelho do Posto* members had profited from the first round of projects. Proposals had been approved in rupiah (the unstable Indonesian currency), but The World Bank provided funding in U.S. dollars, calculated at 7,600 rupiah to the dollar. East Timor's economy still runs in rupiah, so the *Concelho* members converted the dollars using the freelance money changers omnipresent on Dili sidewalks between UNTAET HQ and the elite "Hello Mister" supermarket. They got a better rate (about 9,200) than that offered by the Portuguese bank, but no receipts. *Concelho* members pocketed the 20% surplus, explaining it was "interest" or compensation for their otherwise unpaid work. Dili-based CEP staff were troubled by this "corruption", as were many *Concelho do Posto* members.

Two decades of mixing of public and personal funds during the Indonesian occupation is a hard pattern to erase, further complicated by a three-currency economy and a new, partially-successful local governance system. East Timor still faces challenges on many fronts.

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