

## NOAM CHOMSKY

December 2005

Dear friends,

December 7<sup>th</sup> of this year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the U.S.-backed full-scale invasion of East Timor by the Indonesian military, which led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands. This historic date comes on the heels of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of then-Major General Suharto's bloody seizure of power in Jakarta — one that involved the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of suspected communists over several months. These events were among the worst crimes of the post-World War II era.

Nevertheless, there has been no accountability for those responsible for these atrocities — either within Indonesia or here in the United States — setting the stage for today's ongoing cycle of impunity in Indonesia and increasing the likelihood that the guilty parties and others will feel free to commit further crimes. It also has facilitated the Bush administration's recent end-run around Congress that resumed full U.S. ties with Indonesia's brutal military.

**It is for such compelling reasons that your continued support for the recently renamed East Timor and Indonesia Action Network (ETAN) is so desperately needed.** While ETAN retains its well-known and highly respected acronym, the name change reflects the fact that the organization has long worked on both countries. And given the significant challenges associated with East Timor's independence, the very fragile nature of Indonesia's embryonic democracy, and the many unresolved issues between them, work on both countries is as necessary as ever.

While East Timor is now free of Indonesia's military occupation, and significant democratic space has opened in Indonesia, the TNI still looms large over the latter's political system and remains a threat to the former. As such, no military or political leaders have been held responsible for Suharto-era crimes or those that have taken place since, including crimes against humanity committed in East Timor, Aceh, West Papua, and Maluku. This impunity is a source of continuing worry for Indonesia's civil society and restless regions. It also helps explain why East Timor's government feels compelled to play down demands for justice from its citizenry and instead emphasizes an empty reconciliation process with Indonesia.

**Finally, this impunity fuels the tendency here in the United States to erase any memory of our government's political support and the billions of dollars in weaponry and military training provided to Jakarta over the preceding four decades.** As a result, Washington's role in Indonesia's killing fields of 1965-66 and the invasion and occupation of East Timor has been effectively buried. This has enabled the Bush administration's ongoing efforts to further engage with Indonesia's military, now under the guise of the global “war on terror.”

Two days before Thanksgiving, the Bush administration used a legislative loophole to waive restrictions on U.S. military financing and export of lethal equipment for Indonesia, allowing unlimited assistance to the TNI for the first time in over a decade. In doing so, the administration negated a major ETAN victory won less than 2 weeks earlier, in which Congress voted to retain these restrictions despite aggressive pressure from the State Department and Pentagon.

With the quick stroke of a pen, Secretary Rice and President Bush betrayed the hundreds of thousands of victims of the Indonesian military's brutality in Indonesia and Timor-Leste and undermined efforts at democratic reform. Despite this setback, **ETAN continues to fight the administration's moves, but it needs your support to do so.**

All of the above make up only a part of ETAN's work. Earlier this year, ETAN launched an emergency appeal for post-tsunami Aceh relief. Contributions from people like you helped to fund grassroots organizations struggling to provide relief and reconstruction in that conflict-torn region. ETAN also educates Congress about ongoing military repression in West Papua, where rights violations have drastically increased over the past year.

ETAN continues to press the government of Australia to agree to a permanent sea boundary which fully respects East Timor's sovereignty and international law. Without international pressure, Australia will continue its efforts to steal billions of dollars in revenue that belong to East Timor, funds that could help the world's newest country become independent of foreign assistance and escape from dire poverty.

**These challenges are gargantuan for any organization, especially one the size of ETAN. ETAN's budget is frugal and its funding precarious. But by giving generously, you can help strengthen ETAN for the coming year, so that together we can meet the difficult trials ahead.**

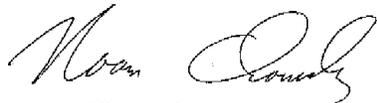
Please join me and hundreds of others who care about the future of East Timor and Indonesia by making a contribution to ETAN today. You can make a secure tax-deductible contribution through ETAN's website: <http://etan.org/etan/donate.htm>.

You can also write a check to "ETAN/U.S." in support of its political advocacy work, or make a tax-deductible donation of over \$50 to "A.J. Muste Memorial Institute/ETAN," which supports ETAN's educational efforts.

Please mail donations to: ETAN/U.S., PO Box 15774, Washington, DC 20003.

Thank you for your support and solidarity.

Sincerely,



Noam Chomsky