

Donate Relief Directly to Aceh

The December 26 earthquake which triggered the tsunami occurred just off the coast of Aceh, Indonesia. Aceh is suffering the worst of the damage. At least 166,000 people have died and countless are homeless.

The East Timor Action Network is collecting contributions from people in the United States who want to give direct aid to local grassroots and humanitarian organizations in Aceh. This money is being sent directly to Acehnese groups whose usual work is with displaced people, especially children. Now that their entire province has become victims of the tsunami, these groups are providing emergency humanitarian aid to those most in need, bypassing the politics and constraints that challenge governments and international organizations.

Aceh has been severely repressed by the Indonesian military for more than a decade because of an ongoing struggle for independence. These political concerns have been put aside to deal with the current catastrophe. Both sides declared a cease-fire, although the military has violated it several times.



Bodies of thousands of victims of the tsunami in Banda Aceh. (Reuters)



However, the conflict influences Indonesian government activities for tsunami victims. International agencies and journalists were severely restricted from the territory from 2003 until several days after the devastation, and the government still views them with suspicion. Many soldiers find it hard to support people who they saw as enemies last month, and victims are reluctant to trust the soldiers.

ETAN has already collected more than \$120,000, all of which is being sent to Aceh. You can donate on-line via credit card at <http://www.etan.org/action/action2/23alert.htm>

You can also send a check payable to ETAN to the address below; please write Aceh in the memo line. Tax-deductible contributions of \$50 or more can be made out to "Nonviolence International"; please write "ETAN/Aceh" in the memo. Thank you.



Survivors received hot food rations on New Year's Day at a makeshift evacuation camp in Banda Aceh. (AP/NYT)

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Calang, West Aceh

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Indonesian soldiers and warships in Calang, Aceh, where an estimated 70% of the population of more than 10,000 was killed by the tsunami. Here, as everywhere in Aceh outside the two largest cities, the Indonesian military requires that international aid workers be escorted by armed soldiers. Since 1989, the Indonesian military has killed many thousands of civilians in Aceh, where repeated violations of human rights have heightened public support for a referendum on independence. The pro-independence movement, whose armed component has observed a unilateral cease-fire since the tsunami, welcomes humanitarian workers and has promised not to harm them.

Photo by Tyler Hicks, *New York Times*, January 13, 2005.