

Report on East Timor atrocities sets stage for political confrontation in Indonesia

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General Wiranto, Indonesia's top security minister and former Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) chief, indicated yesterday he will defy demands by President Abdurrahman Wahid to resign from cabinet after he was named in a report by the Indonesia's Commission of Inquiry into Human Rights Violations in East Timor (KPP HAM). Speaking from the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland on Monday, Wahid said that he would call on Wiranto to resign when he returns to Indonesia on February 17.

At a press conference in Jakarta on Tuesday, Wiranto dismissed Wahid's remarks as an "assumption" and launched a trenchant attack on the findings of the KPP HAM report. His lawyer, Adnan Buyang Nasution, stated that the general would not step down unless proven guilty. The stage is now set for a sharp political battle as Wahid and his allies seek to use the results of the East Timor report to tighten their grip on power and remove Wiranto from his senior cabinet post as Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs.

Both government and military leaders attempted to squash fears of a military coup. The army chief-of-staff General Tyasno Sudarto said on Monday: "I guarantee there will be no coup. I am prepared to relinquish my position." Prior to his overseas trip, Wahid claimed that 90 percent of the military were behind his government. Nevertheless the political uncertainty sent the Jakarta sharemarket plunging by 3.1 percent yesterday as foreign investors pulled out of major stocks such as Telkom and Indah Kiat.

The KPP HAM report released on Monday and submitted Attorney-General Marzuki Darusman contains a list of names for "further investigation" and possible prosecution. The eight-member commission accused 33 military and police officers, militia commanders and civilians of being responsible for "crimes against humanity committed in East Timor" during and after last year's ballot on the future of the former Portuguese colony. Former president B.J. Habibie was exonerated of any responsibility.

Wiranto was at the top of the list. According to the commission, Wiranto had "full knowledge" of the campaign of killing, looting and burning in East Timor in September and, by failing to intervene, had neglected his command responsibility and should be held responsible. The report did not accuse Wiranto of actively directing the campaign waged by local pro-Indonesian militia groups with the backing of the Indonesian police and military.

The Indonesian government has been under international pressure, particularly from the US, to push ahead with the investigation into the role for the military in East Timor. On the

same day that the KPP HAM report was released, a separate UN-sponsored report concluded that the campaign of terror "would not have been possible without the active involvement of the Indonesian army, and the knowledge and approval of the top military command."

The five UN investigators recommended the establishment of an international tribunal with powers to try and punish the Indonesian generals and others responsible. Such a move has been vehemently opposed by the Wahid government, which has insisted that it be allowed to carry out its own investigations and trials in Indonesia. The US, Australia and UN Secretary Kofi Annan have all indicated their willingness—at present—to go along with Indonesia's wishes. Indonesian Justice Minister Yusril Mahendra has announced plans to set up a five-member ad hoc court to try military personnel and also the creation of a reconciliation and justice commission.

The pressure from the US and the UN has nothing to do with any concern about human rights in East Timor. For more than two decades after the Indonesian invasion of the former Portuguese colony in 1975, the major powers tacitly accepted the military's brutal rule over the half island, which resulted in tens of thousands of deaths. The US is pressing for an limited inquiry narrowly focused on the events of last year in East Timor as a means of establishing a clear break with the Suharto military regime and entrenching a government committed to the economic restructuring demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In his remarks in Switzerland, Wahid said he would seek Wiranto's resignation as minister to show his "resoluteness". A featured article in the latest issue of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* makes clear that the main purpose of Wahid's show of firmness with Wiranto over the KPP HAM report is to reassure international investors, banks and financial institutions. It points out that the clash with Wiranto is "to establish the president's authority" and "break open the logjam blocking necessary reforms".

Summing up the key issue for big business in the push to put the military on trial, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* comments: "Lack of accountability is the fundamental flaw in the economy and it is at the heart of the new agreement Wahid signed with the International Monetary Fund in mid-January. Addressing it will be crucial to convincing decision-makers at firms like GE [General Electric] to do more than just exchange pleasantries with the

president. Without investments from abroad, the Wahid administration can't hope to restructure corporate Indonesia's \$70 billion foreign debt and sell assets controlled by the Indonesian Bank Restructuring Agency, or Ibra.

"The impression that Wahid doesn't have a firm handle on his government is standing in the way of billions of dollars of potential foreign investment. The removal of Wiranto could help correct this, particularly if, as expected, it convinces some of his political opponents to back off... It would also help improve Indonesia's investment climate, which was tarnished by Standard Chartered's aborted effort to buy the scandal-ridden Bank Bali in December, viewed by potential investors as an example of how entrenched interests continue to undercut deals."

It is clear that Wahid's determination to show his "resoluteness," particularly at the gathering of international political and business leaders at Davos, is bound up with the changing requirements of finance capital to remove the obstacles of "crony capitalism". International investors require the sacking of Wiranto as a public demonstration that the Wahid government is able to make a complete break with the network of generals, politicians and business cronies that dominated the Indonesian economy under Suharto.

There is little doubt that any trial either in the Indonesia courts or through an international tribunal be extremely limited in character. KPP HAM explicitly exonerated former president B.J. Habibie who was in power at the time of the militia campaign of terror last year. Neither the UN nor the Indonesian government have expressed any interest in extending the inquiries into the long history of atrocities carried out by the military over more than three decades in East Timor and Indonesian as a whole.

According to a report in the *Australian* newspaper, Wahid has already indicated that he would give Wiranto a presidential pardon should the general be found guilty. Moreover, in a letter to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on January 26 arguing against an international tribunal, Indonesian Foreign Minister Alwi Shihab strongly defended Wiranto and the Indonesian military stating that they had "exerted the utmost efforts to quell the violence and destruction during the process of consultations and its aftermath."

The leadership of the National Resistance Council of East Timor (CNRT) has made clear that it will not press for a thorough investigation, trial and punishment of the Indonesian generals. Speaking from Singapore in response to the release of the KPP HAM report, CNRT leader Xanana Gusmao expressed considerable sympathy for Wiranto: "I can't say if I am happy or unhappy. I am not seeking revenge. I know him and he knows me. I just want the truth to be revealed."

Yet, despite the limited character of the Indonesian and UN inquiries, there is already substantial evidence of the complicity, if not direct involvement, of Indonesia's top military chiefs in the militia violence and intimidation directed last year against East Timorese, particularly CNRT supporters. The TNI's actions were a crude attempt to block the moves to independence set in motion by the decision to allow a UN-supervised ballot.

Other high-ranking officers named in the KPP HAM report include the Bali-based regional commander Major General Adam Damiri, former head of military intelligence Major General Zacky

Anwar Makarim, two former East Timor military commanders Brigadier General Tono Suratman and Brigadier General Nur Muis, and the East Timor police chief Brigadier Timbul Silaen. Also cited were the former East Timor governor Abilio Soares, militia leaders Joao Tavares and Eurico Guterres, and members of the provincial government.

KPP HAM found that the army, police and civilian government in East Timor had provided pro-Indonesian militia with arms, finance and training. It stated that individual TNI personnel had been implicated directly or indirectly in the mass killing, torture, disappearances, forced evacuations and destruction that followed the September 4 announcement of the ballot result supporting East Timor independence.

Commission member H.S. Dillon said: "They [the military] created an atmosphere of impunity that not only condoned but encouraged, violations of human rights." Speaking of the Indonesian army and police chiefs on East Timor, he added: "The way the militia were set up and armed and funded, there is no doubt that the people there were instrumental".

An article in the Saturday edition of the *Sydney Morning Herald* outlined evidence uncovered in East Timor of massacres carried out by the militias. The actual body count of victims at this stage has reached 220. According to Sidney Jones, an official with the UN transitional authority in East Timor: "The number of reports of people being killed and the number of reported grave sites are steadily increasing. As people are becoming more confident about coming forward and reporting, the number of cases is going up... If I were to hazard a guess, I'd say [the death toll was] somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000."

The last thing that the Wahid government, the United Nations, the US and other major powers as well as the CNRT leaders are concerned about is elementary justice for the victims of the Indonesian military in East Timor or elsewhere in Indonesia.



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