

Yayasan HAK

Jl. Gov. Serpa Rosa no. T-095 Lt. 1
Farol - Dili, Timor Timur
Telp.: +62 390 313323, Fax.: +62 390 313324

Terror, Violence and Intimidation: ABRI and the Pro-Integration Militia in East Timor

Report on the Human Rights Situation in East Timor
for the period January to March 1999

Introduction

Entering 1999, the process of resolving the 23-year old East Timor problem had bright prospects. The Portuguese and Indonesian governments were continuing negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations and had reached several points of agreement regarding East Timor's political status. Even though nothing concrete had emerged out of the negotiations, the UN thought them worthy of continuing since there had been progress and several sensitive points had been addressed. Meanwhile, the international community was playing a more active role in encouraging the Indonesian government to peacefully resolve the problem and improve the human rights conditions in East Timor.

In response to these international developments and the changes inside Indonesia itself, the Indonesian government undertook several positive steps, such as announcing the withdrawal of about 400 ABRI soldiers out of 21,000 total soldiers. Then, on January 27 1999, the Indonesian government released an important statement about the possibility of a 'second option': the option of 'releasing' East Timor from the Republic of Indonesia. Soon after, the leader of the resistance movement and the president of the CNRT, Xanana Gusmao, was transferred from Cipinang prison to a special detention house so that he could be more effective in contributing to the process of a peaceful resolution.

The resistance movement itself welcomed the Indonesian government's offer and expressed its commitment to peacefully resolving the problem in East Timor. Xanana Gusmao declared that it was necessary to peacefully reconcile the pro-independence and pro-integration forces in East Timor. In order to support that process, he called for all rank and file members of the resistance to stop their armed struggle and reduce their public activities that could be considered 'threatening' to pro-integration groups. As part of this process towards a peaceful resolution, he also met with a number of pro-integration figures and government officials, including the leadership of ABRI in East Timor.

Nevertheless, these positive developments were disrupted, perhaps even destroyed, by the ABRI-backed pro-integration gangs which terrorized and intimidated civilians in East Timor. By April 8, there were a documented 40 fatalities and 22 wounded as a result of gunfire or use of other weapons, 77 victims of torture, eight people arbitrarily arrested, three people missing and two rape victims. Moreover, more than 18,091 civilians were forced to take flee their homes and take refuge in more secure places in order to escape the gangs' terror. They usually took shelter in religious places and other shelters considered secure.

Violence, terror and intimidation committed by the armed pro-integration gangs and ABRI obviously betrays the ongoing process of peacefully resolving the problem. The leader of Mahidi gang, Cancio de Carvalho, operating in the area of Ainaro and Suai, stated that if the East Timorese reject the offer of wide-ranging autonomy, there will be a bloodbath. In mid-March, the right-wing militia Darah Merah, led by Lafaek Saburai, issued a circular that threatened the East Timorese and the resistance movements and called the acts of the pro-integration gangs against civilians too 'lenient.' Such threats from the leaders of these gangs are regularly reported by the mass media.

These have not been idle threats. The gangs have been committing all kinds terrorist acts. It is obvious that their terror campaign is part of an attempt to sabotage the process of peacefully resolving the East Timor problem and asserting their political will. The fact that the government and ABRI have not seriously responded to their actions indicates that the officials do not object to the presence of the pro-integration armed gangs who clearly violate the national law of the Republic of Indonesia. Likewise, as will be shown in this report, the government and ABRI have given their political, institutional, and financial support to these armed gangs.

This brief report is the result of investigations conducted by Yayasan Hak in East Timor and is based on both received complaints and field surveys since December 1998. The intention of writing this report is to present the background regarding the controversy over civil war. The Indonesian government has justified ABRI's presence with the allegation that East Timor would collapse into civil war if the troops were withdrawn. This report is going to show that, on the contrary, ABRI's presence has become the main stumbling block to the peaceful resolution of the problem.

The 'Two Options' Proposal and the Reaction of the Pro-Integration Groups On January 27, 1999, the Indonesian government, through the Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, released a statement about the possibility of a 'second option' for East Timor, that is, freeing East Timor from the authority of the Indonesian government. The statement surprised many parties including the pro-integration group. Even though Ali Alatas then revised the statement, there were all sorts of reactions to it in East Timor. The pro-integration figures, with ABRI support, formed several armed gangs which, as their official statement puts it, are meant to 'defend one's self from the attacks of the pro-independence groups.' On various occasions leaders of the pro-integration gangs confirm that they receive support from ABRI though ABRI officials themselves deny this. In the cases described below, it is obvious that ABRI played a role in the formation and activities of the pro-integration armed gangs.

The following is the description about several armed gangs which have been formed over the past few months:

1. *Aitarak*. This gang operates around Dili under the leadership of Eurico Guterres. In 1988, Guterres was detained by the Indonesian military because he was suspected to be involved in a plot to murder President Suharto when he visited Dili. After he was released, he became the member of Gada Paksi which was established by Gov. Abilio Osorio Soares with the support of Kopassus which was under Lt. Gen. Prabowo Soebianto at that time. Other than that, Eurico Guterres is also known as the leader of a gambling racket at the inter-city bus terminal in Tasi Tolu and several other places. After Alatas announced the possibility of 'second option', Eurico and his supporters established Aitarak militia and announced Dili as their area of operation.

2. *Besi Merah Putih*. This gang, established on December 27, 1998, operates in sub-district Maubara, district Liquica, under the leadership Manuel de Sousa. He was a member of the PDI-fraction in the DPRD 2nd level Liquica from 1992 to 1997. In the first few months after its establishment, the gang recruited its members from ordinary peasants, old people and boys younger than 18. According to some sources, the process of recruitment was done through terror, intimidation, death threats, and stigmatization as 'pro-independence' people. Those who finally agreed to join the gang were promised a wage of 25,000 Rp. per day. This group is one among those who are very active in terrorizing, intimidating, wounding and killing civilians.
3. *Halilintar*. This organization was initially formed in 1975 by a king from Atabae named Mayor Tabesi. Now this organization is led by Joao Tavares, previously the head of Bobonaro and head of 2nd level DPRD Bobonaro. According to some sources, Tavares seized the leadership of the organization from Manuel Maia and simultaneously changed the character of it into a pro-integration armed gang designed to force civilians to support integration. This group operates in the area of Bobonaro and its vicinities and is often involved in violent acts against civilians. A while ago, with the support of ABRI officials, Tavares was appointed the War Commander of the Pro-Autonomy Forces.
4. *Mahidi*. This group was formed at the end of December 1998 at village Cassa, subdistrict Ainaro under the leadership of Cancio Lopez da Carvalho, a worker in the provincial justice office in East Nusa Tenggara. They claim that Mahidi was formed as an attempt to protect themselves from the pro independence youth and Falintil yet in reality it is the civilian population which now seeks protection and flees from the brutality of this gang. According to the testimony of the people of Cassa, this gang terrorized and intimidated people to recruit members and threatened to kill anyone who refused to become part of Mahidi. At this time, Mahidi has about 1,000 'members' and 37 automatic weapons obtained from ABRI. This group operates in the area of Ainaro and Suai.
5. *Saka*. This group was formed during ABRI's Operasi Kikis (Scraping Off Operation) in 1983. During this operation, ABRI used East Timorese people as frontline shields as it hunted down Falintil. This group was initially led by Juliao Fraga. This gang was involved in many killings during the operation in Bacau. After Juliao Fraga was shot dead Oct. 24, 1994 his leadership was taken over by the vice-commander Sgt. Joanico. On March 20, 1999 this group took a ritual oath to remain loyal to Indonesia. The headquarters of this gang is in the village Lai-Sorulai, sub-district Quelicai, district Bacau, and has weapons such as AK-47s, M-16s, and hand grenades obtained from ABRI.

Besides these groups there are a number of others. In the east, there are Team Alfa, Team Sera, and Team Makikit. In the central region, there are Gada Paksi, Kamra, and Commando Darah Merah, and AHI. In the south, there are Tatarah, Team Ablai, Laksaur Merah Putih, and Loromea. In the west, there is the Naga Merah. All these gangs are led by pro-integration figures and gain support from ABRI. In several inaugurations of these gangs, the local ABRI officials, such as the Kodim commanders and civil government officials have attended. As was mentioned before, these gangs often force people to become members and threaten those who reject membership. In sub-district Zumalai for example, Mahidi gang with the support of ABRI's Ratih militia, entered hamlets to force people to become members. Feeling threatened, many people registered themselves as members while many others fled to avoid the pressure. In village Viviquina, subdistrict Maubara, district Liquica, on January 26, 1999, a member of Koramil 03, Maubara, second Sergeant Abilio forced the villagers to register

themselves as members of Ratih. Similar actions were taken by the Besi Merah Putih gang in village Maubara Lisa on the same day. This wave of coerced membership occurred especially between December 1998 and January 1999 when the gangs began to recruit from ordinary civilians.

Government and ABRI Support

Judging from the appearance of the members of these gangs who oftentimes wear uniforms and carry automatic weapons, it is obvious that they have some kind of support from a 'third party,' meaning ABRI. In various interviews published in the mass media, the leaders of these gangs, such as Cancio Lopes de Carvalho, admitted that there was support from ABRI even though the Minister of Defense/Commander of the Armed Forces, Gen. Wiranto, repeatedly denied this statement. In some cases, ABRI support was even shown openly with the presence of local ABRI officials attending official ceremonies held by these gangs.

The close connection between the gangs and ABRI has appeared during their 'joint operations.' On Dec. 27, 1998 in sub-district Maubara, the Gada Paksi gang accompanied by BTT 143 troops arrested and tortured four local people and then raided the villagers' houses. As a result, there were 143 people from this village who fled to Dili. Some of them took refuge in their relatives' houses, while others hid in the house of Manuel Carrascalão, the head of GRPRTT.

On February 15, 1999, members of Besi Merah Putih gang along with Koramil 03 Maubara and BTT 143 troops attacked village Guiso sub-district Maubara and arrested a number of people including women and children. Those who were arrested were brought to the BTT 143 post and tortured. In village Zulo, sub-district Zumalai, district Kovalima, Mahidi gang and troops of BTT 143 attacked the villagers on March 21 1999 and arrested a young man named Atanasio Magno (30 years old).

Even though all these gangs do not have a clear legal status nor foundation, the government and ABRI have not taken any action against them. In the mass media, the government continuously threatens the pro-independence groups if they dare to do anything which violates the law. But they don't do anything against the armed gangs whose very existence is in violation of national law. It is not at all clear whether they have licenses to own and use automatic weapons though there is a law which requires ABRI permission for civilians to own and use such weapons. There is no law permitting gangs like this to replace the function of the police to 'secure the society' much less harm members of the society. It is important to note here that none of these cases of killing, arrest, torture, and arbitrary detention, have ever resulted in the punishment of the perpetrators though the authorities are fully aware of these actions.

All this time, the leaders of these gangs have stated that they are 'compelled to take up arms because they want to be prepared for any violence by the pro-independence group.' Moreover, they always say that their goal is to defend integration with Indonesia, commonly formulated with the slogan 'Defend the Red and White Flag.' From the data gathered, it is obvious that the attacks on the civilians rarely has any clear rationale; they are not reactions to attacks from the pro-independence group. In some cases, the gangs initiated an armed conflict that was then 'settled' by ABRI troops. For instance, on February 15, the Besi Merah Putih gang backed by Koramil 03 Maubara and BTT 143 troops attacked village Guiso, sub-district Maubara. They arrested several villagers including the security officials in Guiso and a woman with a late term pregnancy and took them to the BTT 143 post. The next day, the community in the Guiso village came to that post and asked for the release of their friends. On February 23, the villagers learned that those who detained the friends wanted to make peace and have the sub-district head of Maubara serve as the mediator. On the same day, the villagers came to where

the meeting was supposed to be held and waited for the gang to show up. Fifteen minutes later, the sub-district head of Maubara and Koramil 03 commander arrived at the meeting place accompanied by members of BTT 143 and Besi Merah Putih gang. The sub-district head and the Koramil commander who were in the front car shot at the villagers waiting for them and injured at least four people.

Actually, the intention of the gangs to defend integration with Indonesia is highly suspect since the victims of their attacks include the local officials and civil servants. For instance, in Maubara, on February 2, 1999, about 15 members of Besi Merah Putih gang stopped a car in which the vice-head of 2nd level DPRD Liquisa was riding. Once the car was stopped, the members of this gang suddenly threw stones at them without any clear reason. The passengers (vice head of DPRD and his family) managed to save themselves but their car was confiscated and until now the car is still being used by members of Besi Merah Putih gang for their operations. From the statements appearing in the mass media, it is also obvious that the members of the pro-integration gangs just want to assert their own will and act upon their own group's interests, not the interests of the East Timorese in general not even those of Indonesia. Another victim who is a civil servant is Carlos Alberto (40 years), a staff member at the office of plantations in Liquica. He was terrorized by the Besi Merah Putih gang and accused to be a supporter of the guerrillas in the jungles. These gangs often use this accusation to justify their actions which are obviously in violation of the existing law.

‘Civil War Scenario’

In response to the widespread demand that there should be a referendum as the most democratic means for determining the future of East Timor, the government and ABRI often say that this will only create civil war. This is also the apparent reason for allowing the pro-integration gangs to use automatic weapons in violation of the law and ignoring all the crimes of the gangs. Therefore, while the government always expresses the concern that there will be a civil war in East Timor, it allows, even supports, the creation of a conflict that can develop into a full-scale ‘civil war.’ From the above description, it is obvious that ABRI has been involved in almost every case of pro-integration gang violence, either directly or indirectly. As of now, the Indonesian government has not taken any concrete steps to prevent this situation from deteriorating any further.

The government has never seriously considered the offer for reconciliation and peace from the resistance. On the contrary, the government continues to allege that the pro-independence side obstructs a peaceful resolution. Nevertheless, the evidence compiled clearly shows that it is the Indonesian government, ABRI and the pro-integration armed gangs who are sabotaging the present attempts at peace and reconciliation. The government has not even responded positively to the National Commission for Human Rights proposal to establish a peace commission nor to the UN suggestion to establish confidence building measures among the conflicting sides.

In response to these developments, the leadership of CNRT has recently stated that the East Timorese should adopt any means necessary to defend themselves. In their official statement of April 6, 1999, they said that the terror from the pro-integration gangs and ABRI can not be tolerated any longer. Therefore, all pro-independence forces have been called upon to protect the people. The authorities in Jakarta immediately pounced upon this statement as a declaration of war and displayed it as ‘evidence’ that the pro-independence side indeed wants ‘civil war.’ Equipped with this ‘evidence’, the pro-integration armed gangs and ABRI brutally massacred civilians who had taken refuge in the compound of Liquica church on April 7, 1999. This incident resulted in at least 25 deaths and dozens more wounded. With the support of the mass media, the government tried to explain away the massacre by calling it ‘an unavoidable consequence of civil war’ and tried to distract public attention

by making a major issue of Xanana Gusmão's statement though Xanana himself already corrected the statement.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Considering the development of the general situation in East Timor and referring to the cases of killing, terror and intimidation, it can be concluded that:

1. The pro-integration armed groups with the support of ABRI have committed acts of terror and intimidation to sabotage the peaceful resolution of the problem and maintain the status quo in East Timor. This kind of terror has been noticeably increasing as the time approaches to hold the vote on East Timor's future status.
2. ABRI is in East Timor not as a mediator but as one main party to the conflict. The myth that ABRI tries to reconcile the two conflicting groups has been undermined by the evidence of ABRI's involvement in so many cases of conflict. This concept of a civil war is nothing more than an invention by the authorities to hide their own involvement in the violence, terror and intimidation.
3. The pro-integration armed groups have strove to maintain the status quo and take advantage of Xanana Gusmão's call to his supporters not to do any activities that could provoke violence.
4. By deploying these pro-integration armed gangs, the Indonesian government and ABRI attempt to displace responsibility from themselves for any human rights violations which occur.

Based on the above conclusions, several recommendations can be proposed:

1. ABRI should be withdrawn from East Timor and support to the pro-integration armed gangs should cease.
2. The pro-integration armed gangs should be armed and disbanded.
3. There should be an investigation by an independent team for all cases of human rights violations and these should be reported to the Secretary General of the United Nations and other international institutions.
4. There should be fair trials for all perpetrators of human rights violations
5. The United Nations should immediately send peacekeeping forces to monitor the process of peacefully resolving the problem.

Dili, April 9, 1999

Jose Luis de Oliveria

Yayasan Hak (attachment to report “Terror, Violence and Intimidation” 9 April 1999)

Data on the Internal Refugees due to Terror of the Pro Integration Armed Gangs (PIAG)

Shelter	Origin	Number (persons)	Description
Suai Parish	Sub-district Zumalai, District Covalima	5,975	Terrorized by PIAG Mahidi in the end of January '99. They returned to their original place at the end of February '99
Suai Parish	Sub-district Tilumar, District Covalima	1,106	Terrorized by PIAG Laksaur Merah Putih in the beginning of March '99. They still reside in the shelter.
Maliana Parish	Sub-district Cailaco, District Bobonaro	2,000	Terrorized by PIAG Halilintar and Indonesian military (ABRI) in mid December '98. They have returned to their original place.
Maliana Parish	Sub-district Maliana, District Bobonaro	600	Terrorized by PIAG Halilintar in mid March '99. They are still in the shelter.
Village Sare, Sub-district Hatolia, District Ermera	Sub-district Maubara, Sub-district Liquica	3,033	Terrorized by PIAG Besi Merah Putih during February – March '99. They still live in the shelter.
Village Fatubessi, Sub-district Ermera, District Ermera	Sub-district Maubara, District Liquica	210	Terrorized by PIAG Besi Merah Putih during February – March '99. They still live in the shelter.
Maubara town, District Liquica (Maubara Fort, Pusada, etc.)	Several villages in Sub-district Maubara, District Liquica	2,000	Terrorized by PIAG Besi Merah Putih since January to March '99. They still live in the shelter under the care of Carmelites Sisters of Maubara.
Viqueque town	Sub-district Lacluta, District Viqueque	489	Terrorized by PIAG Makikit, Ratih and Kodim Viqueque towards the end of March 99. They are still in the shelter.
Dili town	District Manufahi, Sub-district. Alas, Same, Fatuberliu, Turiscai	1,255	Terrorized by PIAG Ablai, BTT, Yon 744 & 745 since November '98 to March '99. They are still in various shelters (people's houses and office of GRPRTT).
Dili town	District Liquica Sub-district Maubara & Liquica	966	Terrorized by PIAG Besi Merah Putih since January '99 to the beginning of April '99. They are still in various shelters (people's houses and office of GRPRTT).
Dili town	Sub-district. Atsabe, District Ermera	79	Terrorized by ABRI in mid February '99. They are still in various shelters (3 people's houses in Dili).
Dili town	Sub-district Ainaro & Hatubuilico, District Ainaro	378	Terrorized by PIAG Mahidi since March '99 to now.
	Total	18,091	

Note :

- ◆ This data is obtained from the Emergency Support Post – the Post was recently established with the assistance from the Volunteer Team for Humanity, Jakarta.
- ◆ This data does not reflect the total number of internal refugees because there are many of them who have not been taken into account. It is predicted that the number will increase because of the deteriorating situation in East Timor.
- ◆ This data does not include the 2,000 people who took refuge from villages in district Liquica to Liquica Parish in the beginning of April 1999. They fled the village because of the attack by Besi Merah Putih gang supported by ABRI and Brimob which caused the death of more than 50 people. Precise information about these refugees has been impossible to obtain because access to Liquica district is still blocked by the Indonesian security forces and the Besi Merah Putih gang.

Dili, 9 April 1999

Compiled by Joaquim A. Fonseca, Head of Advocacy Division, Yayasan HAK