



East Timor *Action Network* / United States

National office: PO Box 1182, White Plains, New York 10602 USA
Tel. 914-428-7299 fax: 914-428-7383 email: etan@etan.org

Washington office: Box 30, Suite 504, 110 Maryland Ave. NE, Washington, DC 20002
Tel. 202-544-6911 fax: 202-546-5103 email: lynn@etan.org

Media/outreach office: Box 150573, Brooklyn, NY 11215
Tel. 718-596-7668 fax: 718-222-4097 email: john@etan.org

Website: <http://www.etan.org>

April 9, 1999

Hon. Madeleine K. Albright
Department of State
Washington, DC

Dear Madame Secretary:

We are writing to urge you to step up United States efforts to support the United Nations peace process in East Timor.

As you know, the situation in the territory has deteriorated to the point where the East Timorese resistance was compelled to exercise their right to self-defense by ending their unilateral cease-fire. They could not stand by while their people continue to be slaughtered by Indonesia-backed paramilitary violence.

We appreciate your meeting with resistance leader Xanana Gusmão in Jakarta last month, and the position you expressed during your visit:

"... vigorous steps must be taken to break the cycle of violence on the ground. ... We see an urgent need to stabilize the situation through the disarmament of all paramilitary forces, as Xanana Gusmão has proposed and General Wiranto supports. We favor confidence-building measures, such as a reduction in the number of troops, and an international presence to reduce the prospects for future violence."

General Wiranto lied to you when he said he supported disarming the paramilitaries – and those forces have escalated their murderous activities since your visit. It has become even more obvious that the Indonesian military has no interest in calling them to account. General Wiranto's forces are not only supplying the paramilitaries with their weapons, but also participating in their bloody operations and providing them a safe haven.

Unfortunately, neither the United States nor the international community has taken effective measures to persuade Indonesia to disarm the paramilitary forces or to reduce the number of troops, and the cycle of violence has become an expanding spiral.

On March 18, Assistant Secretary Stanley Roth told the Senate International Relations Committee "In the meantime -- and let me stress this point -- we have given a tremendous amount of attention, both publicly and privately, to breaking the cycle of violence on East Timor in the short term." But it will take more than "attention" from Washington to get ABRI to change their scorched-earth East Timor policy. The United States should cut off all training and weapons transfers to the Indonesian military. When Assistant Secretary Roth visits Indonesia next week, he should communicate this message in the strongest terms.

In the wake of new massacres by paramilitary forces last weekend, and the Indonesian military's declaration that they will do nothing to rein in their "militias," the East Timorese resistance leadership has authorized its armed forces (FALINTIL) to defend themselves and the East Timorese population. Xanana Gusmão believes that the "attitude of passivity" taken by the international community will not stop the killing of his people.

Working to move U.S. policy toward genuine self-determination and human rights for the people of East Timor.

The following day, paramilitaries murdered dozens of people in and outside a Catholic church in Liquica. More than 10,000 refugees from East Timorese villages are already taking shelter in churches, and this number will increase. Yayasan Hak reports that paramilitary activities in the Liquica area have killed 56 people during the past week.

The responsibility for the escalation of violence falls squarely on the Indonesian military and on the international community, including the United States. For many months, Xanana Gusmão and his followers have exercised incredible restraint, suspending virtually all armed and nonviolent resistance activity while the UN-mediated process evolved. They trusted in the good faith of the Indonesian government's proposal of a ballot consultation on an autonomy plan, and that the international community would ensure that the East Timorese people would be able to express their views without fear during that consultation.

The United Nations has been unable even to send in monitors. UN officials do not see demilitarization of the paramilitary forces as a precondition for the balloting on autonomy. The United States and other international leaders have not been effective in their advocacy for an ongoing international presence. And the terror and killings inflicted by Indonesia's "civilian militias" has increased.

Mr. Gusmão has said that the resistance will lay down their weapons when there is a United Nations presence in East Timor. The United States needs to support that call in the strongest terms. Our country must provide the political will and the financial means to enable the UN to stop the spiral of violence.

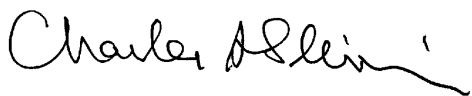
President Habibie's advisor Dewi Fortuna Anwar recently said there was no need for an "outside party" (the United Nations) in East Timor, since the Indonesian armed forces are in East Timor only to keep the situation peaceful and secure. For more than twenty-three years, the Indonesian armed forces have brought only trauma and terror to East Timor. It is time for the United States to call the Indonesian government on its lies.

The Indonesian government is still publicly committed to a peaceful solution including self-determination for the people of East Timor, although their army's actions cast doubt on their sincerity. Indonesian leaders say that the resumption of FALINTIL self-defense operations could derail the "peace process." But their paramilitary proxies have already shattered any semblance of peace. The UN process is more than agreements in New York -- it requires an atmosphere where people in East Timor are free to express their views. When the "Tripartite Talks" resume, Indonesia must commit to disarm the paramilitaries and pull their troops out of East Timor -- and take concrete steps to do it. Otherwise there is no peace process to derail.

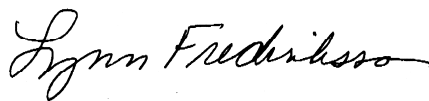
But it will not happen by itself, and it will take more than words from Washington. Please do what you can to achieve the confidence-building measures you outlined in Jakarta.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Charles Scheiner
National Coordinator



Lynn Fredriksson
Washington Representative