



Robert F. Kennedy Memorial

Center for Human Rights

Press Release

Photo courtesy of Stanley Tretick

December 5, 2003

Contact: Miriam Young 202/463-7575 x233

For Immediate Release

Octovianus Mote 203/520-3055

Appointment of Indicted Human Rights Abuser by Indonesian Government To Key Post in Papua Likely to Escalate Violence and Instability

(Washington, D.C., December 5, 2003) – the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights Indonesia Support Group denounces the administration of President Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia for appointing an indicted human rights violator to an important post in Papua.

Jakarta this week appointed **Timbul Silaen**, the infamous former East Timor police chief, as the new police chief of Papua.

At the same time, notorious East Timor militia leader, **Eurico Guterres**, has arrived in Papua to form a militia group there. Guterres worked with Silaen in East Timor during the United Nations sponsored referendum in 1999.

Both developments underscore mounting evidence of a campaign by Jakarta to create increased instability and violence in the territory. These developments further demonstrate Jakarta's lack of political will to hold its government agents implicated in atrocities responsible for their crimes.

At a press conference on December 2, the day following Silaen's appointment, outgoing Papua police chief, Budi Utomo, stated that Guterres had written to him requesting official permission to set up a militia group known as FPMP (*Front Pembela Merah Putih* - Red and White Defenders Front) in the town of **Timika**, home to the giant mining operation of New Orleans-based **Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold, Inc.** Guterres is already in Timika recruiting men for his group and is unlikely to need official permission, given his past association with Silaen.

This is a dangerous development for Papua. Recent incidents there, including several deadly military crackdowns in Papua's Highlands, underscore the analysis that the Indonesian military is involved in a systematic attempt to destabilize the territory and create conflict. As with East Timor, it is likely that militia groups, such as that being formed by Guterres, will play a deadly role in this destabilization strategy. Both Silaen and Guterres have been implicated in serious crimes committed at the time of East Timor's 1999 vote for independence when systematic and gross violations of human rights were perpetrated against the country's civilian population by the Indonesian security forces and their militia proxies

The Freeport mining area has also been wracked with violence, including the still unsolved road-side ambush of Freeport schoolteachers in August 2002, in which two Americans and one Indonesian were killed and eight others seriously injured, including a 6-year-old girl. The **FBI** is currently in Indonesia to continue its investigation into the case, in which the Papuan police have suggested Indonesian military culpability.

The situation in Papua is already extremely tense following provocative attempts by the central government to 'divide and rule' the people by illegally splitting the territory into three provinces, and following Indonesian Special Forces' (*Kopassus*) abduction and assassination of moderate Papuan leader Theys Eluay in November 2001.

"It would be a criminal act for the Indonesian government to allow individuals convicted or strongly suspected of involvement in gross rights violations to assume positions of power in Papua, a conflict zone in which tens of thousands of civilians have suffered from widespread human rights atrocities for more than three decades. The U.S. and other governments meeting in Jakarta next week for the annual Consultative Group on Indonesia should insist that the Megawati administration not allow Silaen and Guterres to operate in Papua." said Abigail Abrash Walton, an RFK Support Group member.

Guterres, leader of the Aitarak militia group, was convicted of crimes against humanity by Jakarta's *ad hoc* human rights court on East Timor in November last year. He was given a minimal sentence of ten years' imprisonment, but is free pending an appeal, which could take many years. Silaen, East Timor's police chief in 1999, was acquitted by the court - which has been widely criticized as being deeply flawed and failing to provide justice for the victims of violence in East Timor - but along with Guterres has been indicted on crimes against humanity charges by East Timor's Special Panel for Serious Crimes [see Notes].

The RFK Support Group calls for Silaen's appointment as Papua police chief to be rescinded, for him to be removed from active duty and transferred to East Timor to face trial. It further calls for Guterres's militia activities to be stopped immediately and for him to be detained pending appeal of his conviction, given he is a danger to the community, or transferred to East Timor to face trial.

ENDS

Notes: Both Silaen and Guterres are charged, along with others, in relation to a campaign of violence against the civilian population of Dili and supporters of independence between April and September 1999. The indictment lists multiple counts of murder, summary execution, enforced disappearance, destruction of property, abductions and other inhumane acts, including the forced deportation of much of the civilian population in Dili. Notable incidents include the attacks on civilian refugees at the Dili Diocese on September 5 and the home of Nobel Peace Prize winner Bishop Belo on September 6, 1999, together with the forcible deportation of some 25,000 people to Indonesian West Timor. Silaen and Guterres are charged with both personal responsibility for these offences and also superior criminal responsibility for the criminal acts or omissions of their subordinates.

Guterres is also charged along with others in relation to the 'Dili Rally case'. The charges include persecution, 13 murders and inhumane acts committed during several incidents on April 17, 1999 in Dili, including an attack on the house of independence leader, Manuel Carrascalao.