



Promoting human rights, peace and democracy in Indonesia

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David Miliband,
Foreign Secretary,
Foreign Office,
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Dear Mr Miliband,

TAPOL is deeply concerned about the decision by the UK's Joint Counter Terrorist Training and Advisory Team to organise training for members of Indonesia's special forces, Kopassus, in October this year at the Kopassus training facility in Batujajar, Central Java.

We understand that the decision to undertake that training is justified on the grounds that Kopassus has distanced itself from politics and now respects human rights.

However, recent events in Merauke, Papua, Indonesia, show that Kopassus continues to be responsible for grave acts of brutality against the civilian population.

A report just issued by Human Rights Watch which draws attention to a number of recent beatings and abuses. Their investigators documented six cases in which local people were subjected to abusive treatment by members of Kopassus.

One case concerns Antonius, a 21-year old Papuan who was seized late one evening late last year by members of Kopassus as he was leaving friends with whom he had been socialising. He describes how he was hit on the face repeatedly with a water hose while lying on the floor. Twelve Kopassus soldiers took part in the abuse.

The victim said: 'They beat me on the face repeatedly. My face was bleeding. My eyes were swollen. Once, one soldier held my chest and another kicked my stomach.' As a result of the abuse, he vomited blood. The following morning, he was forced to chew ten very hot chillies which caused intense pain because of the cracks inside his mouth from chewing betel nut, a tradition among Papuan people.

‘We are scared of Kopassus,’ he said.

In another incident, two brothers, Nathan and Patrick were chased by Kopassus soldiers firing warning shots in the air after a friend had asked a soldier for a cigarette. When they tried to hide, soldiers dragged them out of their hiding place.

Describing what happened next, Nathan said: ‘They repeatedly beat us on the face, blood was everywhere. I do not know the reasons. I assumed they didn’t like Patrick’s friend asking for a cigarette.’

Another victim, Petrus, who was a bystander to a fight was handcuffed by Kopassus soldiers, taken to their mess, beaten with a water hose and kicked in the chest with heavy boots. When he reported the beating to the police, they said it was too dangerous for them to do anything as Kopassus troops were not under their authority.

Kopassus have no legal authority to get involved in law and order which is the responsibility of the Indonesian police. Yet documented evidence show that they are perpetrating acts of brutality with impunity.

These incidents show that Kopassus troops engage in acts of terror towards Papuans even while they are engaged in simple, everyday activities, in violation of their basic human rights.

We urge the Government to press the Indonesian Government to investigate the latest information about the behavior of Kopassus troops in Merauke and to make it clear that training by the UK can only be considered if members of the force found guilty of these abuses are called to account.

Until such time as Kopassus troops have been called to account, training programmes for members of the force should be suspended.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carmel Budiardjo', written in a cursive style.

Carmel Budiardjo