



Refugee
Studies
Centre

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Resumption of martial law in Aceh

by Eva-Lotta Hedman

On 6 November 2003, the Indonesian government announced that the existing state of emergency and the massive military offensive in Aceh were to be extended for a further six months. Meanwhile, international media and humanitarian organisations remain virtually barred from Aceh and their Indonesian counterparts are intimidated and harassed. The extension of martial law in Aceh, while hardly surprising to many observers, will further impede any outside assessment of the need for protection and assistance and resultant distribution initiatives.

The Indonesian armed forces (TNI) have made the management of IDP camps and the distribution of relief goods to IDPs a high-profile component of their military campaign, which has also featured 'embedded' journalists. Such efforts, however, must be viewed in the wider context of TNI campaigns in Aceh, involving forced displacement of villagers, compulsory participation in mass loyalty oaths and rallies, and 'special screening' of civil servants and others for new national identity cards. These campaigns suggest that, in the current climate in Aceh, forced displacement is perhaps best understood as a strategy of war deliberately pursued by the TNI.

The problems of forced displacement due to the conflict in Aceh go beyond mere numbers, which have tended to fluctuate and, in recent months, have declined to an estimated 9,000 IDPs in designated camps. However, these numbers do not necessarily reflect the reported and sometimes repeated movements of people in and out of villages and towns due to the conflict. Within the refugee camps, it also remains unclear what kind of medical assistance is available, not least in view of the Indonesian government's vice-like grip on humanitarian assistance to IDPs in Aceh. (The bud-

get for humanitarian assistance for Aceh is about \$45 million – compared to an estimated \$200 million for the military operation.)

Elsewhere in Indonesia, Acehese have also found themselves the target of new forms of government surveillance and control. For example, the Indonesian military has established checkpoints to monitor the internal border between Aceh and North Sumatra. Such checkpoints, where travel documents and the new national identity card are required for inspection, create considerable difficulties for those seeking to leave war-torn Aceh for North Sumatra. There are also reports of a wider climate of fear and intimidation for the many thousands of Acehese currently living in North Sumatra as IDPs. The Indonesian security forces have reportedly been keen to monitor Acehese communities in many parts of the country, and the police have been particularly active in conducting regular 'sweep operations' in the capital city of Jakarta.

In neighbouring Malaysia, where the largest number of Acehese outside Indonesia have sought refuge, the government has adopted a notably punitive regime on migration. Not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, Malaysia introduced an amended Immigration Act in 2002 under which illegal immigrants may face mandatory whipping, considerable fines or five years in jail. More recently, during a joint press conference with President Megawati Sukarnoputri in late August 2003, (former) Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohammad declared that "Malaysia will not grant asylum to those who flee here from the war-torn Indonesian province of Aceh.... They will be treated as illegal immigrants, hence subject to arrest and deportation." Indeed, 232 Acehese were reportedly arrested and detained outside the UNHCR office in Kuala

Lumpur, and others were targeted in raids on several homes in Penang. Some reports have expressed concern that deportees from Malaysia to Indonesia are met at port by the TNI, only to be returned to Aceh, despite the ongoing armed conflict.

Despite abundant evidence of human rights abuses, violations of international law and a continuing humanitarian crisis in Aceh, the response of the international community has been muted. A recent joint US-EU-Japanese statement of concern over the extension of martial law in the province earned a sharp rebuke from Jakarta, their criticisms and demands for greater transparency and access quickly brushed aside. Against the backdrop of the global 'War on Terror', it appears that Jakarta remains free to wage a brutal campaign to reassert control over Aceh.

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Short courses at the Refugee Studies Centre in 2004

The Law of Refugee Status

15-16 May 2004

with Prof James C Hathaway
(University of Michigan)

Palestinian Refugees and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

22-23 May 2004

with Dr Randa Farah (University of Western Ontario) and Fiona McKay
(Lawyers Committee for Human Rights)

Cross-Cultural Psychology, Forced Migration and Peace Building

23-24 October 2004

with Prof Michael Wessels (Randolph Maco College, USA, and Psychosocial Advisor for the Christian Children's Fund)

New RSC Working Papers

The RSC has recently added six new titles to its Working Paper Series. They can be accessed free of charge via the RSC website (www.rsc.ox.ac.uk). Bound hard copies of the working papers are also available (£5 plus p&p): contact the RSC (address opposite) or order via the RSC website.

No. 16. When forced migrants return 'home': the psychosocial difficulties returnees encounter in the reintegration process, by Tania Ghanem

No. 15. Narrating displacement: oral histories of Sri Lankan women, by Jesse Newman

No. 14. Financing matters: where funding arrangements meet resettlement in three Mexican dam projects, by Jason Stanley

No. 13. Refugees and 'other forced migrants', by David Turton

No. 12. Conceptualising forced migration, by David Turton

No. 11. Addressing the root causes of forced migration: a European Union policy of containment?, by Channe Lindstrom.

Forced Migration Online : www.forcedmigration.org

Several new Research Guides have recently been added to FMO including ones on thematic issues such as 'Camps versus settlements', 'Urban refugees', 'Forced migration and electoral participation' and 'Development-induced displacement and resettlement'. New regional guides include Algeria and Palestinians in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Go to: www.forcedmigration.org/guides/

In collaboration with the Sphere Project (Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response), FMO will put online (in full text) most of the documents in the bibliographies in the revised edition of the handbook in early 2004.

FMO welcomes all suggestions, comments and contributions to the Digital Library. Email: fmo@qeh.ox.ac.uk

Forthcoming conferences

2nd Annual Student Conference on Forced Migration

15 March 2004 : University of Warwick

The 2nd Annual Forced Migration Student Conference will give postgraduate students the opportunity to meet, discuss their research and share their experience within a relaxed and supportive environment. The event is entirely coordinated by students. All post-graduate students studying any aspect of Forced Migration are welcome.

For more information, contact fmsc04@hotmail.com

The Search for Solutions: Achievements and Challenges

9th Biennial IASFM Conference

9-13 January 2005 : São Paulo, Brazil

For the first time, the IASFM's Biennial Conference will be held in South America, hosted by the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo. The conference will focus on the search for solutions to forced migration (see the call for papers at www.iasfm.org for details of sub-themes and panels). It will present an important opportunity to broaden the scope of the IASFM by including issues and perspectives of importance to Latin America, such as involuntary economic migration, the emerging role of Southern countries in third-country resettlement, conflict-induced displacement, and development- and environmentally-induced displacement. This conference will bring together academics, practitioners, policy makers, government representatives and forced migrants.

Visit www.iasfm.org for full details, including registration and grant application forms. Applications must be received by 31 July 2004.

All correspondence concerning the conference should be to: Heidi El-Megrissi, IASFM Secretariat, c/o Refugee Studies Centre (at address opposite).
Email: heidi.el-megrissi@qeh.ox.ac.uk
Fax: +44 (0)1865 270721.

FMR 21- Call for papers

FMR 21 will focus on the return and reintegration of IDPs and will be produced in collaboration with the Internal Displacement Unit of the UN's Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR). The issue will focus on lessons learned from recent return movements as well as policy issues relating to the creation and maintenance of enabling environments for sustainable returns. It will also include some case-studies of recent or current returns. Among the topics to be addressed are:

- restitution of lands and property
- reconciliation and peace building
- the rule of law and return
- protection of IDPs after return
- re-establishment of livelihoods
- psychosocial needs and rehabilitation
- special needs of women and children
- capacity building among local authorities

These topics can be presented either as lessons learned from recent experience or as discussion papers. Papers having relevance to field practice, charting innovations which could be translated into implementation, would be preferred. Widening of discussion to include refugees is also welcomed as are papers that look at how post-conflict communities 'rebuild' and can be strengthened and supported to sustainably reintegrate those coming back (refugees, IDPs and ex-combatants).

Deadline for submissions:
15 May 2004

Length: maximum 3000 words (including maximum of 10 end-notes)

Contact the FMR Editors at
fmr@qeh.ox.ac.uk