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To: all groups with Indonesian prisoners
&
coordination groups on Indonesia

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MATERIAL ON RELEASES AND RELEASED PRISONERS

IN INDONESIA

SUMMARY

The attached interview with Admiral Sudomo, commander of the security organ, KOPKAMTIB, is the most recent official statement on political imprisonment in Indonesia. What is new in the interview is Sudomo's assurance that all but 100-200 of the untried category A prisoners will be reclassified as B-prisoners and released by the end of this year. Previously, it had been assumed that all A-prisoners would continue to be held for eventual trial. In the interview, Sudomo repeats government figures for the number of prisoners still in detention and makes general comments on the position of released prisoners on their return to society.

AI'S CONCERN

Although welcoming the departure from previous policy marked by the commitment to release A category prisoners, AI continues to press for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience who remain in detention without trial.

The interview conflicts in many areas with information received by AI - in particular with regard to the number of prisoners still in detention and the difficulty released prisoners have in finding employment. For an AI account of the current situation, you may refer to Research Mission to Indonesia and New Releases (ASA 21/08/78) and Note on Releases and Numbers (ASA 21/01/79). It is worth stressing that AI believes that at least 25-30,000 prisoners (and not, as Sudomo states 9,739) were still in detention as of January 1979; and that although instances of forcible transmigration of released prisoners to resettlement camps are in fact rare and exceptional, a combination of difficulties facing former detainees has meant that possibly as few as 1% of them have been able to find employment since being released. Among these difficulties are physical debilitation, the need to produce a "certificate of non-involvement" to gain employment in any sector of the economy, and the shortage of relief funds to enable released prisoners to become self-employed. (See "The Story of a Tapol", also attached.) There is no evidence in Admiral Sudomo's interview that the Indonesian government is seriously willing to face these problems.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. The Indonesian government's undertaking to release all but 100-200 A category prisoners by the end of 1979 should be noted and used in publicity whilst emphasising that AI's main concern remains to press for the prompt release of all prisoners of conscience including students and Moslems arrested in the past year.
2. Official indifference to the plight of released prisoners as reflected in the Sudomo interview may be used in groups' relief work.

Translation of an interview with Admiral Sudomo given to a Dutch journalist at the Ministry of Defence in Jakarta (from Haagse Post, 10 February 1979)

Q. How many political prisoners are there left?

A. As you know, we release a group each year. In 1977 10,000, last year another 10,000. So now there remain 9,739.

Q. In October 1977, Amnesty International said there were still between 55,000 and 100,000 political prisoners.

A. That is ridiculous. Amnesty should come here and see.

Q. You are inviting them?

A. For me there is only one condition. If they change their attitude, it's OK. If not, this relationship remains the same.

Q. What do you mean, change their attitude?

A. Well, they should stop writing this false propaganda and disseminating their false reports to the public.

Q. Maybe you could contribute to that by letting them come (to Indonesia).

A. That depends on them. If they want to stop, it's OK.

Q. When will the last tapols be released, and will they really be released, all of them?

A. Yes, except for those who will be tried because we have enough evidence against them.

Q. You mean the A-prisoners?

A. Yes.

Q. How many of them are there still?

A. 1,391.

Q. Will they all be tried?

A. No, not all of them. Some of them will receive B-status.

Q. And when will the remaining prisoners be tried?

A. As soon as possible. It should have happened by the end of 1978, but as you know, the preparations take quite some time. We'll just have to postpone it to this year.

Q. How many A-prisoners will be brought to trial?

A. That's hard to say. Maybe 100 or 200.

Q. And the remaining prisoners will go into the B-category, and will subsequently be released this year?

A. Yes, that (category) will be released this year.

Q. So, by the end of this year, there will remain a maximum of 200 A-prisoners untried?

A. Yes. And then of course they will have to wait for the decision of the court. To give an example, a case may take at least three to four months. That's the situation. It is not easy.

- Q. You once said that of the B-prisoners, 30 to 40 per cent are "diehards", who just refuse to forget their communist ideas, and that they might not be released at all.
- A. No, that's not true. Everyone will be released. So all of the B-category will be released this year.
- Q. Can the released prisoners, who have never been tried, take up their old trade or profession again?
- A. Yes, of course, why not. Unless they were members of the government. Public service is out of the question. They can return to the private sector only. The problem is the following: directly or indirectly they were involved (in G3OS) because they were members of the communist party. But we have not been able to find enough evidence to take them to court.
- Q. So, although no evidence has been found against them, they cannot return to the public service?
- A. No, because they were members of the communist party, that is enough.
- Q. That was not an offence when they were arrested. The PKI existed openly, and there were millions of members.
- A. But now the PKI is banned.
- Q. The question is, can you punish someone retrospectively for something which was not punishable when he did it?
- A. You should see this in the light of the instruction to all members of the party (in the PKI-party program) to overthrow the government. They all know this precisely. And in that, they of course have their own responsibility. So we must look at it from the point of view of state security. So we take no risk. For that reason we detained them, but now we will release them again. That's how it is.
- Q. Will those who were detained without trial receive indemnity?
- A. Why should we give them indemnity? Weren't they PKI members?
- Q. Is that certain for all those people?
- A. Yes. They have all been party members.
- Q. Do released prisoners get support from the government in order to start a new life in society?
- A. Yes, the government has taken measures. Those who can't find a job, get five acres of land and a house in resettlements. That is on a voluntary basis.
- Q. I don't really mean the transmigrants, but those that return to their own villages. Do they get support?
- A. That's no problem. They can return, so they are received by the people. Now it depends upon them whether they can give up their communist ideology.
- Q. Is there no longer a condition which says that they can only return to their village if they can find work there?
- A. They can find work in other places. That's no problem.

- Q. When it is not certain that they can find work in their own village, are they still allowed to return?
- A. Yes, and the greater part take up their old work - as farmers for instance. They used to have a piece of land, and they cultivate it again.
- Q. Is there still city-arrest for newly-released prisoners?
- A. No, we have abolished this. There is no city-arrest any more. There is no house-arrest. They are free. They can go wherever they want.
- Q. They do not have to report to the police every week?
- A. For all civilians there is a rule which says that everybody that goes from one place to another, has to report. That is a law in Indonesia. So, when I come from A and I go to village B, then I will report: "I am here for so many days and then I will go home". That rule is in force for everybody.
- Q. So, the ex-prisoner that has returned to his village (say, Depok) doesn't have to report to the police of Depok every week?
- A. No, that has been abolished.
- Q. Has the "Surat Bebas G30S-PKI"* also been abolished?
- A. Yes, that has been abolished as well. If you want a job, for instance, in the public service especially, and you were not yet twelve years old in 1965, then you do not need a declaration. If you were older than twelve, you do need a declaration. But that is a one-time thing only. It is only necessary once, after that no more.
- Q. Are there many companies that don't employ people when they don't have a Surat Bebas? Does the government give instructions on that?
- A. Never has an instruction like that been sent out. Companies may employ them, but you can understand that they don't want to take any risks.
- Q. That psychological test for political prisoners, to which Dutch psychologists contributed, is that still in use?
- A. Yes, it is still used. But I want to correct this: it is not true, what's written in the papers, that we used Dutch psychologists. We only talked with them about a system to find out what a person's ideology is like.
- Q. But they helped in designing the test?
- A. No, that's not true. I myself was present at the designing of the test. They had nothing to do with it. There was an ordinary discussion (with Dutch psychologists in Holland). This team of Indonesian psychologists has also been in England and America. There they also spoke with a couple of professors. Well, from the results of those talks, the test was designed, which is 80 per cent reliable. Besides that, we also use the B.A.P., that is the declaration the suspected person signs after his interrogation. You have to compare it (the test) with that. And then we get to know whether the man is lying or not. And so we know his ideological state. We express it in percentages. But it is not true we gave Dutch psychologists the opportunity to draft the questionnaire.

* Certificate of non-involvement in G30S-PKI

Indonesian psychologists talked with other psychologists in the Netherlands, England and America, and returned after that. The questionnaire was composed later, and by Kopkamtib really, not by Indonesian psychologists. The problem is: what measures can we take to find out someone's ideology? I have said to the Americans, don't you have a computer that we may put in someone's head, to know exactly what his ideology is?

- Q. How are the results of the test used?
- A. This test now is used every six months. For instance you get result A, and after six months result B. Then we compare: has he changed or not?
- Q. And that continues after they are released?
- A. No, no, during detention. When they are free, they are free.
- Q. So what it in fact amounts to is that people whose psychological tests have indicated that they cannot be trusted ideologically, will be monitored carefully once they have been released.
- A. Well, not exactly. In general these people will always be monitored. For us it is only a kind of documentation of all the prisoners. You should remember that we have had some bitter experiences; in 1948 we had the first communist coup, in 1965 the second. I don't think we can afford a third one. Therefore we have taken preventive measures, so that it won't happen again.
- Q. Many Islamic political prisoners were converted to Christianity during their period of imprisonment. I have heard that these people were prevented by the Islamic clergy from being baptized. Is that true?
- A. No, that's not true. The situation in our country is such that religion is a very sensitive issue. Very different from in the Netherlands. If someone here chooses another religion, then that is his right. Nobody can prohibit him from doing so: it is his conviction. The problem is that it cannot be made public because then you'll get comparisons like 'this religion is better than that one', and then you'll get unrest. So, the government's opinion is that religion is a personal matter. But it should not happen publicly. It should be done quietly. But that we prohibit it is not true.
- Q. Has the transmigration of prisoners been voluntary? According to Amnesty International, these transmigration camps are in fact permanent penal colonies.
- A. Oh, just let Amnesty carry on writing! They are free to do so. If they don't want to, then there's always another group that wants the land, because it's very fertile. So at the moment everybody wants that land. For example, during the registration it appeared that 200 of the communist prisoners wanted to stay on Buru. The land on Buru is sufficient for only 700 prisoners since there are only 3,500 acres. So, if we give every family five acres, that would be enough for only 700 families.
- Q. So other prisoners who want to transmigrate shall have to choose somewhere else?
- A. Yes, but voluntarily. They can go to resettlements in South and West Sumatra, Jambi, West and East Kalimantan and North Sulawesi.

- Q. I have heard that 14,000 people will be transmigrated to Buru.
- A. No, there's space for only 700 families.
- Q. There have been reports that some villages do not accept their former fellow villagers who have been imprisoned. Are these people told that they should transmigrate?
- A. No, they can go back to their village. But what we are confronted with at the moment is the fact that their families do not want them back. And that presents many problems.
- Q. Because they are afraid of difficulties?
- A. No, because the return of the head of the family only brings them more problems, and so they don't want him back. In fact they've become very bitter.
- Q. What are you doing about it?
- A. Well, they can come back to the prison camp, and that's where they will be given a house outside the camp with a piece of land.
- Q. How many people have been affected in this way?
- A. Well, some of them go and look for work, etc. But at the moment, there are almost 200 ex-prisoners who have returned to their camps.
- Q. Does the land which is given to the people in the transmigration centers become their personal property?
- A. Yes, they're given five acres. And they're also given credit to buy seed. The government will give subsidies for a period of one year. They are also entitled to make use of credit facilities that exist for other farmers. They can even become members of the cooperative. Of course, they will have to pay back the credit in the usual way. But the government takes care of the house and the land.
- Q. So they can also buy and sell their products freely?
- A. Yes, of course, why not?
- Q. Should they get fed up with the transmigration center, would it still be possible for them to leave?
- A. They can leave at any time.

Haagse Post, 10 February 1979
(Wiecher Hulst)

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Interview with Ex-Prisoner of Conscience in Indonesia

Attached is an English-language translation of an interview given by a former prisoner of conscience in Indonesia to a Dutch journalist. The interview appeared in Haague Post (The Netherlands) on 10 February 1979.

The subject of the interview is a Tapol (an acronym for "tahanan politik", political prisoner). His name is not given in the interview, but it is evident that he was detained for most of the period between 1966 and 1977.

AI believes that as of March 1979 at least 25,000-30,000 political prisoners remain in detention in Indonesia, most of them imprisoned for 12 years or more and most of them untried.

AI is circulating and distributing this interview because it illustrates the treatment of prisoners of conscience in Indonesia over the past decade and the kind of difficulties they face on release.

Translation from Wiecher Hulst's article in Haagse Post, 10 February 1979

THE STORY OF A TAPOL

He is 48-years-old and an ex-journalist. He has been imprisoned for a total of ten years. He is small and very thin, but his voice does not match his appearance: it is loud, and sometimes there is a resolution in his speech which makes one suspect that he was once decisive and authoritarian. He does not show any emotions. His voice falters just once, when he tells me how he was tortured.

Q. When were you arrested?

A. The first time in June '66. I was released after three months, but in September '68 I was re-arrested. I was finally released in December '77.

Q. Of what were you accused?

A. They said I was a PKI-member. But that is not true and I have therefore always denied it. They may have thought I was lying, since I worked for a left-wing paper. I did sympathize with communism, but I have never been a party member.

Q. Why were you arrested twice?

A. A reporter working for another paper denounced me to the government. He said that I was a PKI-member. I knew him, he worked for ... (name of paper).

Q. When were you sent to Buru?

A. In September '76. Before that I was in the Salemba Prison in Jakarta, from May 1969 onwards. Between October '68 and May '69 I was in an interrogation centre. There I was interrogated three times. But in Salemba, and also on Buru, I have not been interrogated again.

Q. Were you tortured during the interrogation?

A. Yes. The first two times by means of an electric current. They attached wires to my fingers, and if I did not give the correct answer, then ... then they switched the current on. It came from a car battery. I do not know its voltage, I think it was twelve volts. That happened on two consecutive days, from eight o'clock in the evening until three o'clock next morning. The third time they beat me on my back and neck with a rubber cudgel. It was very painful and I could not walk for two days. After that I was able to move only slowly. But that was the last time I was interrogated.

Q. What kind of food were you given in prison?

A. At first it was very bad. During the first year in Salemba we were given 100 grams of rice twice a day. Now and then we would also be given a little tempeh. But apart from that nothing, no sugar, no vegetables, nothing. After December '69 the situation improved and we received more rice.

Q. Were your fellow prisoners PKI-members?

A. No, most of them weren't. They had only been members of SOBSI (the communist trade union), of the BTI (the communist farmers' union) or of Gerwani (the communist women's organization). And there were also many members of the youth organization.

- Q. What was the situation on Buru like when you arrived at the end of '76?
- A. Better than before: the prisoners were allowed to grow rice, corn and ubi. We sold part of the harvest to the government, which enabled us to buy fertilizers and pesticides against the wereng (green fly). Yes, the fertilizers and pesticides were bought from the government, through the camp administration.
- Q. How much did the camp administration pay the prisoners for the rice?
- A. One kilogram cost about 100 rupiahs. I do not know the official price at that time. It is quite possible they received more for it, because they in turn sold it outside the camp. (According to official statistics supplied by the Bank Indonesia, the market price for a kilogram of rice of average quality in the beginning of 1977 was between 123 and 140 rupiahs, depending on the region. Ed.)
- Q. Did you also have to give rice, corn and ubi to the camp administration?
- A. Yes, they had to eat and drink too. The prisoners were divided into 21 units, and every unit had its own commander and about 20 guards. Altogether around 400 men. And we had to feed them.
- Q. Were there many sick people?
- A. Yes, many people were ill, the climate on Buru is very harsh. They were mainly TB-patients, I think 300 or 350, but perhaps more. Every unit had its own sick ward. We built this ourselves, and we tried to treat the patients with simple medicines.
- Q. Who gave you the medicines?
- A. Only the churches, Catholic and Protestant, supplied us with medicines. We received nothing at all from the government.
- Q. When did you learn of your release?
- A. Around 15 December. I was released together with 42 other people in my unit, and on 20 December we left for Jakarta by boat.
- Q. Did the camp management mention the subject of transmigration before you were released?
- A. No, never. It was only at a later stage that I read in the papers that some prisoners are being transmigrated again, that they go back to Buru. But I do not know any other prisoners who have been transmigrated.
- Q. Did you manage to find work after your return?
- A. Not easily. I now teach privately. I am sure no paper wants me anymore. In fact I haven't even tried; after all, I am an ex-prisoner. Besides, I am 48-years-old now, physically very much weaker and I cannot cope with the work anymore. My health has deteriorated, I catch colds easily, which means I am unable to work for two or three weeks at a time.
- Q. Do you have a Surat Bebas G30S-PKI? (certificate of non-involvement in G30S)
- A. No, I didn't fill in the form. A lot of firms employ only people who have that certificate. I couldn't get that anyway, since I'm an ex-prisoner. If I would apply for jobs, they would ask me for such a certificate, so there's no point. I couldn't work in a school either, except perhaps

in a private school. I give private lessons at the moment, but I earn very little, only 15,000 rupiahs per month. My wife was given money by the churches to buy a sewing machine so that she could work as a tailoress, but she does not have many customers yet; at the most two or three per week.

Q. What kind of reception did you get upon your return?

A. Whilst I was in prison, my family moved to another kampong in Jakarta, and I have different neighbours now, although everybody knows I have been in prison. Most people are friendly and accept me easily. Nevertheless, I was surprised to find such a difference between rich and poor people; the poor are friendly and receive me easily into their circle of friends, but the rich do not want to know about me. That difference is striking. However, in general people are glad that I am free again; they know we have suffered badly. My family received me very kind-heartedly. I know there are ex-prisoners who have been rejected by their families, although I think they represent a minority; most people are happy to have us back. My wife too, she has waited for me for ten years.

Q. Have you changed because of your imprisonment?

A. Yes. I have been in prison for ten years and the most important thing is that I never used to believe in God, but I do now. I have discovered God, and it has changed my life. It was an enormous experience to discover that I am someone who believes in God. And I shall always believe in God. I will be baptized soon, but I have been a Christian for a long time now. I also want to become very active in the Christian movement. For example, I contribute towards giving assistance to ex-prisoners. The churches give them credit to start a new life, since the government does not provide them with anything, not even money to pay for their fares when they want to return to Jakarta. I, too, was given money by the churches to pay for my fares. If it was not for the Christian churches, ex-prisoners would find themselves in a miserable situation; the government gives aid to transmigrants only, they prefer prisoners to transmigrate. The government says it does not want to force the prisoners to transmigrate. Well, if they are going to ask me, I shall refuse and tell them that I want to live in Jakarta and that somehow or other I will get myself a job. My experience on Buru has made me realize that life is hard. Many of us were not used to leading the life of a farmer, and the soil on Buru is very poor, very infertile. One needs to use many fertilizers in order to grow anything, and the wereng causes many problems. I do not want to lead a life like that again.

Q. Do the police keep an eye on you?

A. No, I don't think so. That would be an impossibility, there are so many of us. It would be too difficult; tens of thousands of prisoners have been released.

Q. Did you ever speak to the man who denounced you to the government at the time?

A. Certainly. I saw him and asked him whether he realized what he had done. He asked me to forgive him. I did so because I do not feel any hate for him. I forgave him and I have told him that I cannot hate him, since I believe in God. Whatever I may have been, that period is over.