

Komnas Ham and the Joint Fact-Finding Team confirmed incidents of sexual assaults against ethnic-Chinese women during the May riots. Ms. Raadhika Coomaraswamay, **UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women**, who visited Indonesia and East Timor late in 1998, urged that legal reform and sensitivity training be the priorities of the newly formed National Commission on Violence against Women. Girls are reportedly being pulled out of high schools in greater numbers than boys due to the economic crisis.

Indonesia is developing draft legislation to counter discrimination against **persons with disabilities**, but economic, educational and health care barriers remain. As a result, Indonesia's disabled population depends largely on the support of family and charitable organizations. **Homosexuality** is illegal according to Koranic law, but is tolerated if discreet.

Indonesia is the South-East Asian economy hardest-hit by the economic crisis, contracting 15% in 1998. City-dwellers have been very hard hit and people have had to scramble to find work and any other means that will bring in income. There have been problems with food distribution and affordability due to a credit squeeze and high inflation. In the labour field, Indonesia has acceded to the International Labour Organization's Convention 87 Concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize and has released labour leader Muchtar Pakpahan. Reports continue, however, of intervention by security forces in labour disputes.

The increasingly strong voice of Komnas Ham, and those of a myriad of established and new NGOs are **expanding civil society's role** in calling for greater accountability, democratization and respect for human rights. Through their efforts, past and present abuses by ABRI are under increased public scrutiny.

A number of **structural problems** contribute to continued human rights problems in Indonesia: the dual military and political role of ABRI; the absence of an independent judiciary; and endemic corruption. Social tensions rooted in the economic crisis are fostering riots and violence beyond the ability of ABRI and the police to control them, especially in the context of what is predicted to be a violent election campaign. Most fundamentally, the state repression of the past has created a legacy of popular violence which will hinder efforts to improve Indonesia's human rights situation.

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada has **consistently expressed concern** over Indonesia's human rights record, and has called for: the continued release of political prisoners; the respect for and protection of ethnic and religious minorities; follow-up on the report of the Joint Fact-Finding Team; revision of key laws; the holding of free and fair elections; and investigation of allegations of misconduct by the security forces. The Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs raised human rights concerns with the Indonesian Foreign Minister at the 1998 ASEAN and APEC meetings. The Canadian Secretary of State for Asia Pacific visited Indonesia in October to discuss with President Habibie, among other things, the treatment of the ethnic Chinese minority.

Canada is in the process of negotiating a **memorandum of understanding** with Indonesia on technical assistance in the area of human rights, and hopes to explore further cooperation under the Bilateral Consultative Forum. CIDA programmes advance our human rights objectives in Indonesia, addressing fundamental participatory, social, gender, environmental and economic issues. It funds, among others: the cooperation between the Canadian and Indonesian Human Rights Commissions; the Women's Support Project; the Participatory Development Project; and the Indonesia Governance and Human Rights Facility. In June, the Canadian and Indonesian Justice Departments signed a Letter of Intent for cooperation in legal reform.