

Leader of the Independent Trade Union (SBSI), Muchtar Pakpahan, remains on trial for his political role in the July 1996 riots. His case has served to focus international attention on the Government's treatment of trade unions, and its infringement of freedoms of expression and assembly.

Fundamental structural problems remain at the root of human rights abuses in Indonesia. The military maintain an oppressive presence in East Timor and generally operates with little regard for human rights. The police are a branch of the armed forces. The legal system remains subject to political interference and the political system has no true democratic accountability. The Government is rife with corruption at all levels. While reforms have been pursued at gradual pace, the economic crisis has emboldened the population to push more stridently for meaningful reforms, in a society that has undergone very little political change in 32 years.

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada has consistently expressed its concern over Indonesia's human rights record, particularly in East Timor. Human rights were discussed at numerous high level meetings in the past two years. During Mr. Axworthy's visit to Jakarta in July 1997, he and FM Alatas signed a Joint Declaration establishing a Bilateral Consultative Forum with a mandate to facilitate dialogue in bilateral and international areas, including governance and human rights. Under this initiative, Canada and Indonesia co-hosted a bilateral Human Rights Colloquium in Jakarta on October 29-30, attended by Canadian and Indonesian officials, NGOs, the media, business representatives, and ASEAN and other international observers. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) continues to fund cooperative activities of the Canadian Human Rights Commission and Komnas Ham. A highly successful human rights workshop was held in Jakarta in December 1997, opened by Vice President Try Sutrisno.

Canada continues to take interest in the case of Muchtar Pakpahan. In December, the Canadian Government facilitated the travel of a Canadian medical team to Jakarta to diagnose Mr. Pakpahan's condition using Canadian LIFE equipment. The results of tests performed on Mr. Pakpahan are awaited.

Canada's development cooperation program furthers our human rights objectives in Indonesia, addressing fundamental social, environmental and economic issues. CIDA, through its bilateral and partnership channels, cooperates with local organizations promoting women's rights, child labour, access to legal reforms, human rights training and religious tolerance.