



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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September 20, 2005

Honorable Jim Kolbe
Chairman, Subcommittee on Appropriations
House Foreign Operations Committee
United States Congress

FAX: 202-225-0378

Dear Representative Kolbe,

As you may know, for well over a decade the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has been outspoken in defense of the Church and people of East Timor. As a consequence of this, we supported efforts by our government to press Indonesia first to cease its brutal repression of the East Timorese people and, now that East Timor is a free and independent nation, to press for appropriate accountability for crimes against humanity committed by the Indonesian military (TNI) and their Timorese militias.

Although the Catholic bishops of East Timor have spoken in favor of an international tribunal to examine and seek a measure of justice for these crimes, this Conference has taken no position on that matter. What we do favor, however, is sending a clear message to the Government of Indonesia that the crimes of the past cannot simply be ignored today. While good bilateral relations with Indonesia are important in the global war against terrorism, we should not cease in pressing that government to make good on its promises to reform its military and make a full account of past crimes and inadequate military reform.

May I respectfully ask you to consider placing appropriate human rights conditions on the military assistance to Indonesia, as reflected in the Senate version of the foreign operations language this year and as was done by both houses of the Congress in the Conference Report of last year.

With appreciation for your consideration of this request, I am

Sincerely yours,



Most Reverend John H. Ricard, S.S.J.
Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee
Chairman, Committee on International
Policy