

# ***INDONESIA: CIVIL UNREST***

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### ***The Disaster***

Indonesia has returned to relative calm following several days of rioting, culminating in looting and violence in the capital Jakarta on Thursday 14 May. The Indonesian military reports that 499 people died in unrest that day, most of them victims of fires in stores, lit by looters as they ransacked shops in several Jakarta neighbourhoods. The Jakarta city government reports that 3,029 buildings, 950 cars and 513 motorcycles were destroyed or damaged. More than 1,000 alleged rioters were arrested.

Some of the looting took place near Jakarta's shanty towns, indicating a link to the deteriorating living conditions of the city's poor in the wake of the country's financial hardships. Media reports also link the upheaval to the deaths of six students, who were killed when the military allegedly shot at a group of demonstrators on Tuesday last.

Several foreign governments — including those of the United States, Canada and Japan — have begun mass evacuation of their nationals from Indonesia. Similarly, several large corporations are organising evacuation of international staff and their families. Most shops in Jakarta have been closed for several days. Tanks guard government installations and downtown hotels.

President Suharto, who returned early from Cairo on Friday morning, reacted to events by promising to reshuffle his cabinet. He has now indicated that fresh elections will be called at an unspecified time, but his name will not be among the list of candidates.

Students have called for fresh demonstrations on 20 and 21 May.

### ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

The Indonesian Red Cross Society (Palang Merah Indonesia or PMI) has been operational from the start of the unrest in Jakarta, with the local Chapter and five Branches mobilising 16 ambulances and 200 staff and volunteers. Until Friday, the ambulances were used mainly to move injured to hospitals and to transport foreigners and victims of ethnic tension to safety. Each ambulance is operated round the clock, with 4 - 6 volunteers working in three shifts. First aid teams are a crucial component of the operation.

On Friday, PMI volunteers spent most of the day performing the grim task of removing charred bodies from burned-out department stores. At the Jatinegara Plaza the crew helped remove bodies from a fire that claimed at least 130 lives. Most of those who died were trapped on the upper floors of the five-floor shopping centre when fire started on the third floor. PMI ambulances transported a total

of 98 injured people from Jatinegara Plaza to hospital on Thursday night. In Tangerang, outside of Jakarta, more than 300 teenage looters died in a fire at the Plaza Ciledug shopping centre.

The Federation Representative in Jakarta is currently working with PMI and liaising with ICRC, whilst the Kuala Lumpur-based Federation Regional Information Delegate on mission to Indonesia is providing media and information support to the PMI. The Federation website has been updated with information on the PMI response, taking advantage of recently-procured mobile reporting equipment. This equipment has made it possible to post text and photographs onto the *Direct from the Field* web page ([www.ifrc.org/news/dftf](http://www.ifrc.org/news/dftf)) and on the Asia Pacific website ([redcross-ap.ifrc.org](http://redcross-ap.ifrc.org)) within hours of events taking place.

## *Needs*

Following a co-ordination meeting held in Jakarta on 16 May (ICRC, Federation, PMI), it was decided that the Federation would support the purchase of materials to restock and to strengthen the capacity of the PMI ambulance and first aid teams. This will include 80 medical kits for PMI's ambulances (five kits per ambulance), five hand radios (to enhance communications between ambulances and control centres), 16 oxygen tanks and a number of other essential items.

**Whilst at this stage the Federation will not be launching a full Appeal, contributions to cover the purchase of the above equipment (estimated cost CHF 50,000) are requested.**

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