

# ***INDONESIA: Social and Political Unrest***

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## ***The Emergency***

Following a change in the country's Presidency in April this year (an event preceded by serious unrest) the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) held a special session from 10 to 13 November to discuss twelve draft laws related to the political reform process and the announced legislative elections for 1999.

During the days preceding the MPR meeting, students who have an agenda of demands linked to the peace process converged on Jakarta from all over Java. On 10 November (Tuesday) many of them attempted to move to the MPR building, but were stopped by road blocks erected all over the city by the Armed Forces and Police.

Whilst for the initial two days the demonstrations went on peacefully, they became more forceful on the third day and were met by violent reactions from the Armed Forces, who were still trying to stop the students from reaching the MPR building. Many people were wounded and the first of a total of 12 deaths occurred. Altogether 90 people were reported wounded, of whom 40 were transported by Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) ambulances to different hospitals.

On 13 November (Friday), the final day of the MPR meeting, the demonstrations became violent almost immediately after midday prayers. Violence was even worse and more widespread than the day before and went on well into the night. A total of 240 people were wounded, of which 120 were transported to hospital by the PMI ambulances. The situation improved on Saturday, when the meeting was over.

By the morning of Monday, 16 November, the situation in Jakarta was calm.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

The PMI Jakarta provincial chapter and five district branches provided support to the local authorities' emergency preparedness task-force (Pusdalsis). This included placing 12 PMI ambulance teams on standby, including four ambulances stationed in high risk areas (the MPR area, Trisakti University, Atmajaya Catholic University and Proklamasi street near the University of Indonesia). The other ambulances remained on standby in the Chapter and branches. Additionally PMI placed volunteer first aid detachments in most university sites in Jakarta.

During the unrest the ambulance teams and volunteers provided first aid coverage, transporting the wounded to hospital and helping to evacuate other vulnerable people from areas of unrest.

Three PMI ambulances had their windshields smashed by demonstrators who disagreed with the ambulance service extending aid impartially, as needed. There was also occasional misuse of the emblem including an incident when an individual who was not a volunteer but was reportedly wearing a red cross emblem, was killed during the demonstrations.

## *Needs*

Following the unrest during April this year, PMI restocked its supplies and strengthened its ambulance fleet; it was therefore well placed to respond to the situation. While much of its emergency medical supplies are depleted it is not at this stage seeking external support.

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