

INDONESIA: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL UNREST

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The Disaster

As the worst social, political and economic upheaval experienced in 30 years continues to grip Indonesia, the country is now facing serious unrest with ongoing violent clashes between students and the Armed Forces. The situation shows few real signs of improvement. On 17 December, 1998, an estimated 4,000 students expressing demands for change in the political process fought the Armed Forces with sticks, bamboo spears, iron bars, and stones. One student was killed and at least 80 were seriously wounded. The clash took place in Jakarta, directly outside the People's Consultative Council (MPR), with students demanding the dissolution of the MPR, immediate elections, and other reforms. The current wave of violence is the worst since 13 November (the final day of the MPR session), when over 240 people were injured.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Similar to the recent demonstrations which began in May, ambulances of the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) provided immediate medical assistance and transport services for the dead and wounded. On 17 December, four ambulances which were mobilised from the Jakarta Chapter transported as many as 31 people to local hospitals. Other PMI emergency units have also been placed on alert in high risk areas, including in the vicinity of the MPR.

Needs

Whilst the immediate needs (primarily medical resources) are covered by PMI, with the support of the ICRC and the Federation, the most recent events indicate the potentially wider nature of the social, political, and economic crisis. In response to the more immediate needs, the Federation is requesting further funding support for the PMI disaster preparedness programme (the programme document is available on request). To cover wider and more chronic needs, the Federation will launch an Emergency Appeal in early January, 1999, with a focus on providing assistance to an estimated 900,000 of the most vulnerable people, a group who form just part of the estimated total of 100 million people who now live below the poverty line of one US dollar a day (according to UNICEF).

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