

**For Immediate Release
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**ROBERT F. KENNEDY MEMORIAL INDONESIA SUPPORT GROUP
CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION TO ADDRESS
DETERIORATING HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN PAPUA**

Washington, DC – The **Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights** has launched an Indonesia Support Group to promote respect for human rights and effective conflict resolution in Indonesia, with a special focus on Papua, Indonesia's easternmost province (formerly named Irian Jaya). Members of the group were in Washington last week to meet with members of the U.S. Congress, the Bush Administration and the media to discuss current events in Indonesia, and Papua, and to express their concern about a number of developments there that are jeopardizing prospects for nonviolent conflict resolution.

Of immediate and urgent concern is the "door-to-door" operation launched by the Indonesian military forces (TNI) in the Baliem Valley in the vicinity of Wamena in early April. The pretext for this military operation was an attack on a military unit in the area in which arms were stolen. The operation against civilians has included illegal detention, torture of detainees, burning down of homes, and a re-introduction into Papua of Indonesia's notorious *Kopassus* special forces. Amnesty International and the respected Papua-based human rights group ELSHAM have reported the death of one detainee, who died in military custody under torture. Following discovery of some of the stolen armaments inside the housing complex of the military compound, senior military officials have acknowledged that military personnel were involved. **The Indonesia Support Group calls for a halt to the military operation and withdrawal of the newly arrived *Kopassus* forces, and for transfer of responsibility for the investigation to the police. In addition, the group urges Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas Ham) to send a team to Wamena immediately.**

The Support Group also is concerned by a presidential decree ordering the division of the Province of Papua into three provinces. This decree, which some legal scholars regard as illegal, abruptly supercedes the special Autonomy Law for Papua now being implemented with the involvement of Papuan government and civil society and the Indonesian Parliament. President Megawati's sudden decision, backed by military elements that would stand to gain financially through establishment of new military commands in the new provinces, has sown division in the Province and increased uncertainty about its political future. **The Support Group notes broad Papuan opposition to the division plan, and shares the view of many, including the U.S. Government, that autonomy offers a far better future for the Papuan people than the plan to divide Papua.**

Finally, the Support Group continues to push for a full accounting of the murder of two U.S. citizens and one Indonesian and the wounding of eleven others (eight of them U.S. citizens) within the project area of US mining company Freeport in Papua on August 31, 2002. The Support Group welcomes efforts by the FBI to investigate this terror attack but is concerned by reports that the FBI is not receiving full cooperation from the Indonesian military, which has been implicated in the attack. **The Support Group notes and welcomes the assurances of the**

U.S. Administration that it will consult with the U.S. Congress, about this and other instances of Indonesian military abuses and impunity, before implementing training assistance for the Indonesian military under the IMET program.

The Support Groups set up by the RFK Center for Human Rights (CHR) are a self-sustaining mechanism for providing ongoing, consistent support for the in-country work of RFK Laureates. The CHR has four active Support Groups working in conjunction with its Laureates from Indonesia, Liberia, Haiti, and Kenya, and is developing groups to support those in Brazil, Turkey, and India.

Leading Indonesian human rights lawyer Bambang Widjojanto received the RFK Human Rights Award in 1993 in recognition of his work in Papua. The Indonesia Support includes:

***Abigail Abrash**, director of ActionWorks and former RFK program director for Asia;
Edmund McWilliams, U.S Foreign Service officer (ret.) and former Political Counselor in the US Embassy/Jakarta;*

***Octavianus Mote**, Visiting Fellow at Yale University and former journalist with Kompas, Indonesia's largest daily newspaper; and*

***John Rumbiak**, Visiting Scholar at Columbia University and Supervisor of ELSHAM (the Institute for Human Rights Study and Advocacy) based in Papua*