

occur for some time in all kinds of countries, and I think that the status of the political prisoners has never been defined, while the status of war prisoners has already been discussed by the Red Cross. I am thinking of a fair trial, for instance, instead of a lasting detention for an uncertain amount of time; of house-arrest instead of imprisonment, which would certainly lighten the burden of the families; of regular (monthly) visits which would be able to maintain the ties between father-mother and children and prevent estrangement; of the possibility to read and write and do other constructive work..... Could not these things be discussed on a world scale, to make the best of an unfavourable situation?"

From a letter written by the wife of a political prisoner to friends abroad.



Political prisoners doing compulsory work at the Balikpapan airport, East Kalimantan.

A CRY FOR HELP FROM 800 POLITICAL PRISONERS IN EAST KALIMANTAN

The letter translated below, dated 4th January, 1972, was written and signed by one of the 800 political prisoners now being held in East Kalimantan. He was writing from Balikpapan.

"Dear Sir,

Here in East Kalimantan, 800 political prisoners, including myself, have been held under detention since October 1965 in connection with what is generally called the 30th September/PKI Movement, without any prospect of being released.

We all have suffered from extensive interrogation and investigation, far exceeding the bounds of humane treatment. We have been beaten which more than once led to the hospitalisation of the victim. Heavy tyres have been tied round our necks. We have been stripped naked and our testicles have been punched. We have been thrown into the sea and pushed into self-dug pits covered at the bottom with glass splinters. We have been given electric shocks and cigarettes have been used to burn us. I could go on like this but this piece of paper would not be large enough to describe all the hardships we have suffered. There are some among us who have been shot through the mouth. The authorities have forced us to confess to things that are not true even though we have already told them everything of importance in connection with our cases.

Lately, it appears that the authorities have begun to trust us a little: we are allowed to work outside. We have been forced to work on the construction of Government buildings for meagre remuneration. Often we have to work as 'volunteers' and receive nothing at all. The officers use us as servants to wash dishes and clothes and to clean out the toilets. If you care to earn Rp. 75 (\$0.18) a day, you can work day and night on the reconstruction of the Balikpapan Airport. There are hundreds of other odd jobs we have to do for the officers, far too many to mention them all. Because we have been imprisoned for such a long time already and no-one seems to do anything about our release, many of our families have broken up. Many wives have decided to get a divorce, and more often than not, the children of prisoners have to leave school for financial reasons. Many of my friends have died: sometimes death surprises us while we are chopping wood in the forest. There are female prisoners here too, some of whom were pregnant when they arrived. Their children have been born and raised in captivity.

These are just a few of the problems I should like to stress. It is nothing more than a broad outline. Since we do not know how long they will go on detaining us and the future offers no prospects - not even exile with our families like our friends who have been sent to Buru - we ask you for your help and support as soon as possible. Perhaps it will be possible for you to ask the Government to hear us and to put us on trial. If it is proved that we have done nothing wrong, we could then be released. However, if the authorities still want to consider us as a danger to society, would it not be possible for them to exile us to a remote island, together with our families?

We are eagerly awaiting your help and we thank you in advance. We are relying upon you - it is our only hope for the future.

Yours sincerely,"