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Brief
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UN/East Timor: Empty Hand (U)

UN efforts to avert a humanitarian disaster in East Timor are collapsing, despite the imposition of martial law and the arrival on September 8 of a UN Security Council delegation in Jakarta. UN discussions in New York about the composition of a multinational peacekeeping force or in Jakarta with the crumbling Habibie government will probably have little bearing on the brutal reality being shaped in East Timor. (C)

The UN's decision to evacuate the bulk of its Assistance Mission for East Timor (UNAMET) staff from the Dili compound on September 9 follows an unsuccessful attempt by UNAMET to obtain food and water from a nearby UN warehouse. Militias apparently forced them to flee back to their compound, where more than 2,000 Timorese who have sought refuge risk being attacked following the UNAMET withdrawal. UN and church compounds are no longer havens, with militias now explicitly targeting them; three priests were among the approximately 100 people feared killed in a massacre in the southern coastal town of Suai. (C)

Dili is now "looted, gutted, and gone," according to Embassy Jakarta. With UN personnel and foreign journalists expelled and telecommunications cut, East Timorese over the next few days can expect little mercy from rampaging militias and increasing numbers of Indonesian military (TNI).

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[Redacted]

[Redacted] In western Timor, newly arriving refugees are overwhelming local capacity to provide food, shelter, or protection; two UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) staff were slightly wounded and forced to curtail their review of border camps, where militias are assassinating selective pro-independence leaders. (C)

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