

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

September 30, 1980

The Honorable Edmund S. Muskie
Secretary of State
State Department
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We have all been greatly concerned about the situation in East Timor. As you know, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has provided emergency food and medical assistance over the past year which has saved the lives of tens of thousands of East Timorese.

We were greatly encouraged to recently learn that the Government of Indonesia has decided to allow the ICRC to remain in East Timor beyond October. The efforts of the Department of State to ensure the continuation of these relief operations deserve commendation. We believe, however, that the ICRC should be allowed greater access to East Timor. To date, the ICRC has been unable to operate with more than a skeleton staff on the island. We strongly urge you to take action to encourage the Government of Indonesia to permit the ICRC to increase the number of its personnel in East Timor. The Department of State has recently acknowledged that serious medical problems continue to exist in East Timor. An expanded ICRC staff could provide this needed medical assistance.

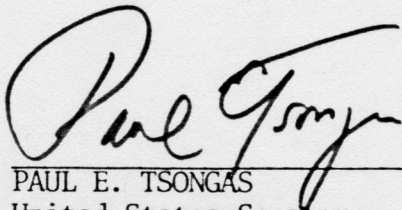
In addition, we note that the ICRC has not been permitted to enter prisons in East Timor. Prison visitations are a part of the ICRC's traditional mandate, and the organization has had access to prisons in Indonesia in the past. The importance of such visits in East Timor has increased, in light of recent reports of renewed fighting and the incarceration of large numbers of political prisoners. Our concerns over prison conditions have been intensified by Amnesty International's recent report to Congress on human rights in East Timor. Mr. Secretary, we ask you to take appropriate steps to ensure that the ICRC be allowed to begin prison visitations.

Finally, we are disturbed by the fact that families who were separated during the conflict in East Timor have been unable to be reunited. Many thousands of East Timorese desire to join their relatives living abroad, and the Governments of Portugal and Australia have indicated their willingness to accept refugees; yet very few people have been able to leave. The ICRC should be allowed to facilitate these family reunions as this is one of its internationally sanctioned humanitarian functions.

Mr. Secretary, we believe that the Department of State should encourage the Indonesian Government to permit free emigration from East Timor and allow these families to be reunited. Specifically, we would like to know what steps the Department of State is taking to encourage Indonesia to permit the departure of the people whose names are enclosed. We ask that the ICRC be given the full support of the United States Government in its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of East Timor.

We appreciate your assistance.

Sincerely,



PAUL E. TSONGAS
United States Senator
