

PRESS RELEASE

Declaration of liability of the State for massacres on South Sulawesi in 1947

Amsterdam, 7 May 2012 - Today, ten Indonesian surviving relatives have held the State of the Netherlands liable for the murder of their spouses and fathers in 1947, by Dutch military on the island of South Sulawesi in Indonesia.

During the war of decolonisation between the Netherlands and Indonesia, commando's (Depot Special Forces) received orders at the end of 1946 'clear' South Sulawesi from insurgents. The actions under the command of captain R.P.P. Westerling and sub-lieutenant J.B. Vermeulen lasted for approximately three months. The rapid success was owing to the rigorous action, also referred to as 'the Westerling method'. Based on this method, all Indonesians with anti-Dutch sentiments were executed summarily. In South Sulawesi, in excess of 3,000 Indonesians were killed in a three-month time span.

In 1954, the Committee Van Rij/Stam concluded that Dutch soldiers committed criminal acts on South Sulawesi: "The authorities adopted the way of extra-statutory trial and execution, which in itself was "absolutely unlawful"". The investigators also concluded that captain Westerling was left to his own devices virtually unsupervised on South Sulawesi: "the highest authorities of the Dutch East Indies at the time ... have allowed for and approved, if not ordered, that an obviously non-military task, which is encompassed by safeguards in a State under the rule of law, was placed under the concept of 'military activity'".

The soldiers who were responsible for the massacres in South Sulawesi have never been prosecuted. The State of the Netherlands have never submitted an apology or paid any compensation to the surviving relatives of those who were murdered.

The victims ask for financial compensation for the death of their spouses and family members, but above all they want an apology and acknowledgement for the distress they were caused to undergo by the State. The K.U.K.B. Foundation, representing the victims of South Sulawesi seeks a solution for all criminal acts committed on South Sulawesi.

Earlier, the Court of The Hague awarded a similar claim to the widows from Rawagedeh (Java).

This press release was composed by the law firm of Böhler Advocaten in Amsterdam and issued by the foundation 'Stichting K.U.K.B.' for their counsel Prof. Mr. Liesbeth Zegveld, LL.M.

Contact person: Prof. mr. Liesbeth Zegveld, LL.M. – Böhler Advocaten, Keizersgracht 560-562,
1017 EM Amsterdam. Tel.: +31 (0)20-344 62 00, e-mail: LZegveld@bohler.eu