

# ACEH FOUNDATION

## PRESS RELEASE

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## For Immediate Release

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### **Friends of Aceh present *EPICENTER*: Aid for Aceh**

**Who:** Experimental music and visual artists in collaboration with Acehese activists.

**What:** Fundraiser party to benefit victims of the tsunami in the Indonesian province of Aceh.

**When:** Thursday, February 3, 2005 from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m.

**Where:** Clemente Soto Velez Center, 107 Suffolk Street between Rivington and Delancey, Manhattan. Admission: \$10-\$20, sliding scale; donations of \$40+ receive a limited edition t-shirt with original art work by Seth Tobocman.

When the tsunami hit on December 26, Aceh (pronounced "Ah-chayh") was not only near the epicenter of the largest earthquake but also the hardest hit by the tsunami waves. The coastline was shattered, countless villages were wiped out, and much of the capital, Banda Aceh, was flattened. The Indonesian government estimates total deaths for Indonesia are over 160,000; the majority of these dead are in Aceh.

**Friends of Aceh** is raising funds on behalf of locally based grassroots organizations (such as Aceh Kita, Kontras, Flower Aceh, and People's Crisis Center) that were operating in Aceh prior to the tsunami. Aceh Kita is an independent media organization in Aceh. Kontras is the Commission for Disappearances and Victims of Violence. Flower Aceh is a women's organization focusing on economic livelihoods, women's empowerment in Aceh, and women's human rights. The People's Crisis Center is a humanitarian organization working to build community livelihood, health and education for the peoples of Aceh.

Why Aceh? The province has received proportionately less attention and assistance than most other areas, even though it has suffered the greatest losses. This is a result of the Indonesian government's restriction of access to the province, and the imposition of the state of "civil emergency" to counter a longstanding independence struggle by the Acehese. Until the disaster struck, Indonesia restricted access of journalists and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from Aceh.

Because of the Indonesian government's corruption and repressive policy towards the Acehese, it cannot be counted on to provide proper assistance. One independent journalist in Banda Aceh reports that much aid is piling up unused at military bases and airports and that every night military forces are looting these homes still standing in the capital.

**Friends of Aceh** will donate the funds raised directly to indigenous organizations engaged in humanitarian relief. Major relief organizations have been silent about the extent of military control of the relief operations, and the harm done towards those efforts. The grassroots organizations are not present in Aceh because of permission of the Indonesian government or military, they live there. Friends of Aceh is committed to supporting the organizations involved in long term reconstruction, renewal, and community organizing.

**Friends of Aceh** is an ad-hoc coalition of New York-based and Acehese activists, musicians, visual artists, and collectives working together to raise funds for Aceh. Members include Bluestockings bookstore, East Timor Action Network, Beatboxer Entertainment, HavocSound, Blackkat, and Amoeba Technology.

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