

## **Now, a 'sea of fire' in East Timor**

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AFTER WEEKS OF threats and bloodshed, Election Day in East Timor was eerily calm. But when the votes had been cast and the outcome seemed unfavorable to Indonesia, which seized the former Portuguese colony in 1975, the violence started up again. One target was a slum called Balidi, which sprawls around the headquarters of the United Nations mission supervising the election. Pro-Indonesia militiamen fired their homemade guns and Army--supplied rifles into the air, threatening to kill people who had voted for independence.

When a handful of pro-independence teenagers jeered at the militia, the gunmen opened fire, and the youngsters fled. But one 19-year-old tripped and fell. The militiamen hacked him to death with machetes.

Under U.N. supervision, 98.6 percent of the 450,000 eligible voters turned out to choose between independence and autonomy within Indonesia. The overwhelming majority 78.5 percent chose independence. Long before the tally was complete, the militiamen began to make good on their threat to turn East Timor into a "sea of fire" if its people opted for freedom. The bloodshed was worst in the west, the militiamen's stronghold, where at least four local U.N. workers were killed and six more were missing. "They are out of control. They are crazy," said one evacuated U.N. employee. Indonesian security forces did little to stop the violence. Instead, the government said it might accept U.N. peacekeeping troops in East Timor. But the United Nations won't send peacekeepers without a ceasefire. If the militiamen can provoke a civil war by announcing secession in the west, there won't be any peace to keep.