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NEWS

Chinese tell of brutal rapes in Indonesia

By **Julie Chao**, *OF THE EXA*
July 29, 1998

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1998-07-29 04:00:00 F **AY AREA** -- For months, the economic crisis and democracy demonstrations in Indonesia made world headlines, the upheaval culminating in hundreds of deaths and the downfall of President Suharto, after 33 years in power.

What the headlines didn't reveal was that much of the violence was aimed at Indonesia's 8 million ethnic Chinese. And what didn't come to light until weeks after the most fierce looting, rioting and arson attacks was that hundreds of Chinese women and young girls w ivors and human rights observers say. Many wer

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Indonesian Chinese in th as tales of families living in fear floated acro n reports surfaced of the brutal rapes – some hey just couldn't sit silent any longer.

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"We were silent when the [illegible] our property," said John Oei of San Francisc[illegible]

"But we can't stand it wh[illegible]

Oei, who works as an ins[illegible]ndonesian Chinese American Network (Ican[illegible]teers have knocked on the doors of politicians a[illegible] to the ethnic targeting.

Icanet is leading a petitio[illegible]ited Nations to condemn the human-rights violations. The group is also calling on the United States to cut off military aid to Indonesia until certain conditions are met.

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At 1 p.m. Saturday, Icanet will hold a teach-in at Marina Middle School, featuring videos and witness testimony of the atrocities.

Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous country, yet one most Americans know little about.

The United States has given Indonesia more than $1 billion in military aid in the last 25 years, according to Ben Terrall, San Francisco coordinator of the East Timor Action Network, a human-rights organization.

The anti-Chinese violence has resonated beyond the estimated 12,000 to 15,000 Indonesian Chinese in the Bay Area, Oei said.

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"This has created a furor among the overseas Chinese all over," said San Francisco attorney Edward Liu, who helped start a Web site (www.huaren.org) to keep track of developments. "We're getting hits from Mauritius, Norway, South America and, of course, Southeast Asia."

Fifty Bay Area Chinese organizations are helping to collect signatures for the petition and the topic has dominated Chinese newspapers and radio shows, Liu said.

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed a resolution last week, co-sponsored by Supervisors Mabel Teng and Leland Yee, urging Congress to call for an investigation into the violence.

Although the worst violence took place over a three-day period in May, Oei said reports of rapes persisted. Chinese continue to live in fear as the political situation remains unstable.



"My relatives live in terror," Oei said. "If they go out in the street and look Chinese, they could be killed."

One of the lucky few able to flee the country was Kelly, who arrived in San Francisco earlier this month. Fearing for the safety of remaining family members in Indonesia, she did not want to give her full name.

In May, her house and surrounding neighborhood in Jakarta were looted by a huge mob.

"They took everything, th ent," she said.

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A few days later, she went to the hospital with a church group to visit rape victims. What she saw were women so traumatized they couldn't speak. But of all the horrific crimes, what shocked her most was the sight of a woman whose nipple had been bitten off.

"When I saw that, I just couldn't handle myself," she said. "She was black and blue from head to toe."

An Indonesian government agency said this month it was investigating 468 reported rapes of Chinese women after deadly riots broke out in May.

The National Unity Devel d many victims, their families and witnesses. S been raped in front of their parents, said Rosita umber had been hospitalized, many had b ter committed suicide.

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The governments of China and Taiwan also have voiced strong concern about rapes and other attacks against ethnic Chinese during May riots in Indonesia and called on Jakarta to investigate the racially motivated violence.

The People's Daily, China's Communist Party mouthpiece, quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Tang Guoqiang as saying China had repeatedly urged the Indonesian government to investiga Chinese.

Stephen Zunes, USF prof se sentiment in Indonesia had mostly be d government as part of its divide-and-conqu ower in 1965, hundreds of thousands of Chinese

"The scapegoating is a v lite to steer attention away from them and tow s. "The ethnic Chinese have been essentially se

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Oei and others say statements in the press such as

"Chinese make up 4 perc 0 percent of the economy" unfairly depic a small Chinese elite fall into that category. Th class.

Fremont engineer Lie Ye tes from Indonesia 13 years ago, said Chinese rd Indonesian people.

"This problem is not betv e Indonesians. They're both victims," Lie said.

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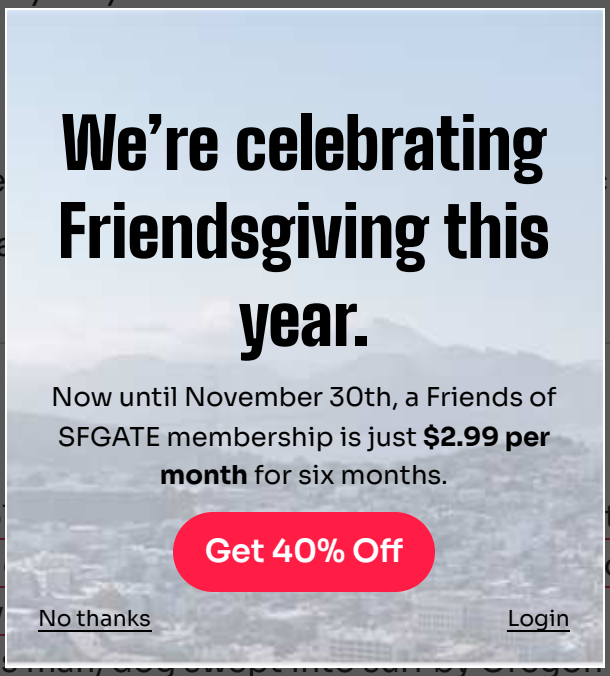
"This problem is caused by a system that has been nurtured by the government - divide and conquer."

Lie also said Chinese we h things as attending university or getting a pa



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Whereas the world paid little attention to the bloodshed in Indonesia 30 years ago, activists believe technology can make a difference today. Personal accounts and discussion of the anti-Chinese violence first appeared on the Internet and are still most active there.

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"In the 1960s, there was

"Looking at the outcry th k we may be able to make a change." <

July 29, 1998

Julie Chao

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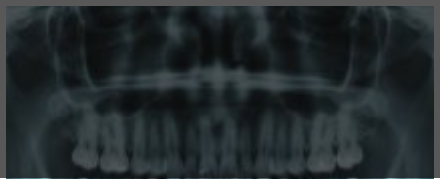



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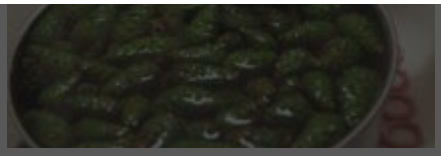

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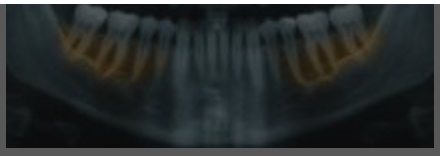

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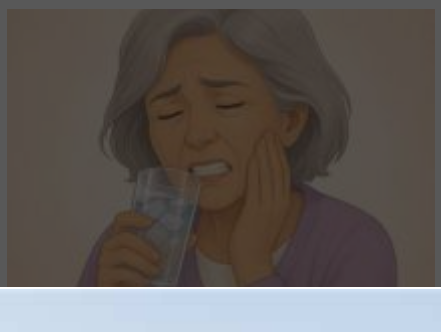

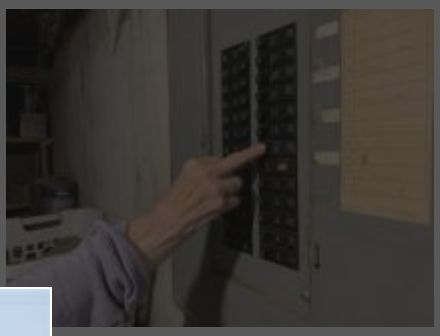

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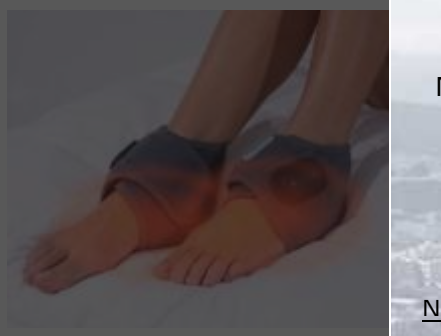

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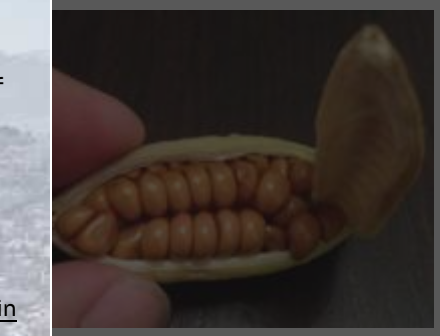

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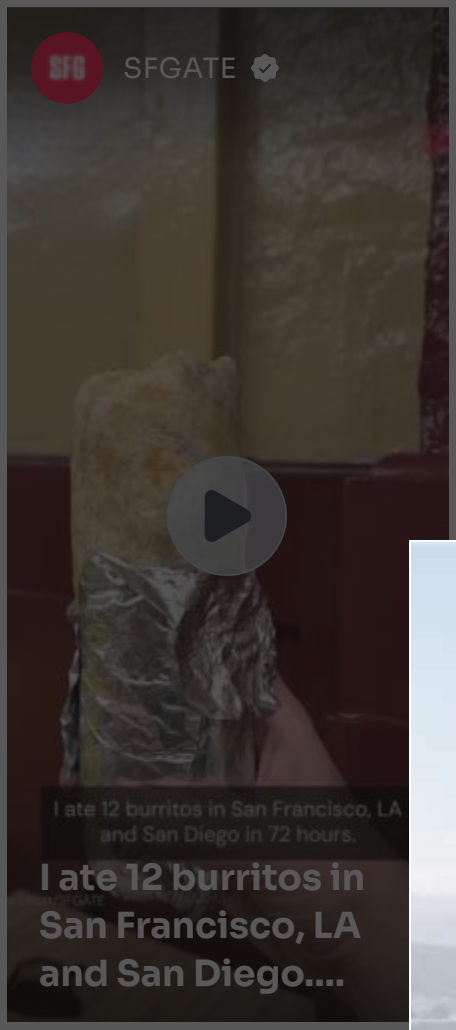

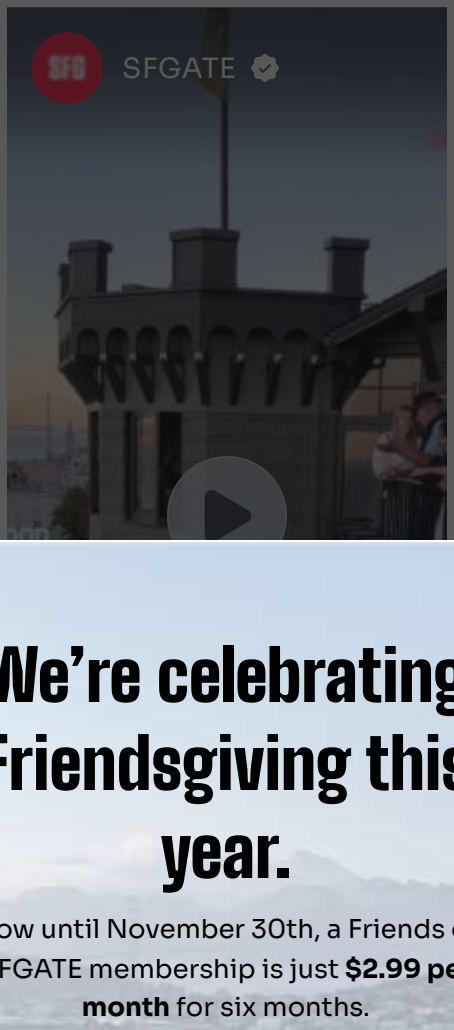

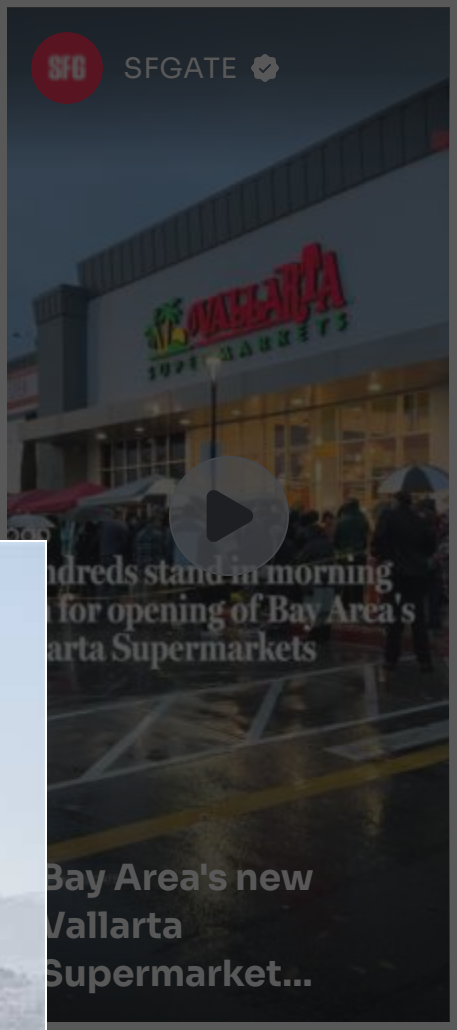

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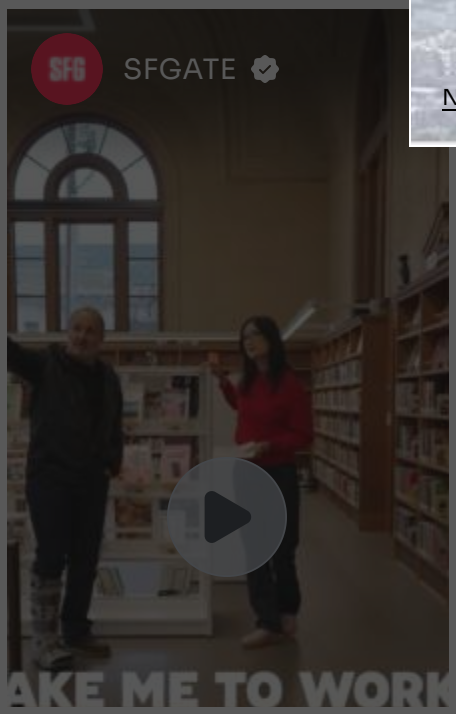

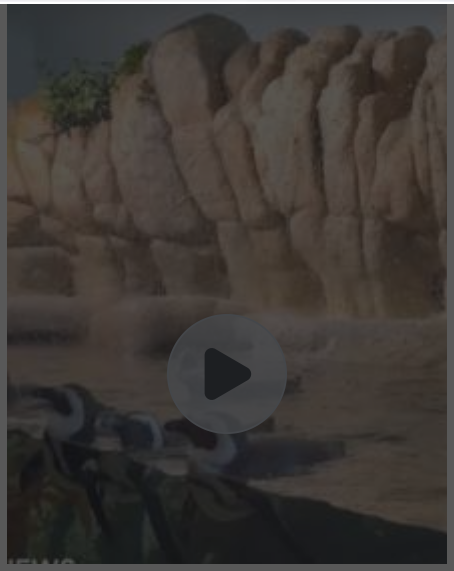

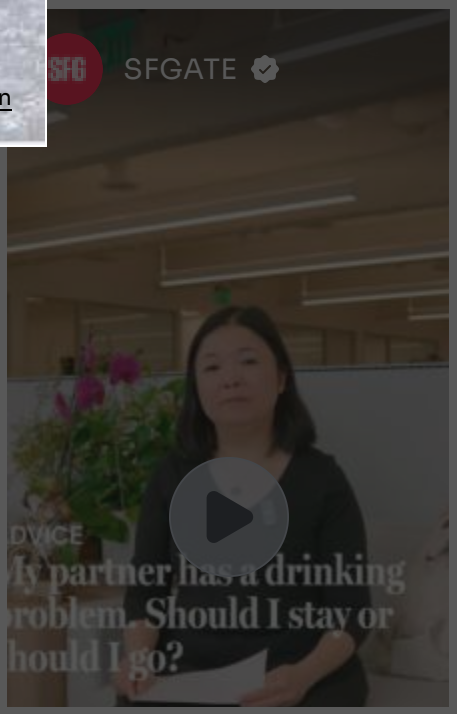

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