

Forced Displacement and Famine

National Public Hearing, 28-29 July 2003



BOOKS FROM THE CAVR

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Foreword Public Hearings of the CAVR

Public Hearings were a key part of the CAVR programme designed to fulfil our mandate pursuant to Regulation 10/2001. Establishing the truth about past human rights violations, assisting with the reintegration of those who have harmed their communities through community reconciliation hearings, and helping victims of violations to restore their dignity were all objectives of these various hearings.

When the CAVR was formed, the seven National Commissioners developed a clear principle that the CAVR would attempt to be as open and participatory as possible. As a result, the CAVR designed a programme that involved teams working at the village level across the country, always seeking to engage the community in culturally appropriate ways. Providing for communities to come together and discuss the past in a peaceful and reconciliatory way was a key part of this work. At the national level, public hearings broadcast by television and radio across the country promoted a wide sense of participation in a national dialogue about past violations and building a future based on respect for human rights.

This series of seven booklets covers the national thematic public hearings of the CAVR. These hearings were all held at the former Balide Prison, rehabilitated to become the headquarters of the CAVR, and were on the themes of Political Imprisonment (February 2003), Women and the Conflict (April 2003), Famine and Forced Displacement (July 2003), Massacres (November 2003), Internal Political Conflict of 1974-1976 (December 2003), Self-Determination and the International Community (March 2004), and Children and the Conflict (March 2004).

Prior to these hearings, the CAVR held a national Victims' Hearing in November 2002, at the former CNRT and UNAMET compound in Balide.

CAVR district teams also organised and facilitated a wide range of public hearings. District teams divided their work into three-month time periods for each sub-district. At the end of this period of taking statements about past violations, organising community reconciliation processes and conducting community workshops about past violence, the team conducted a sub-district Victims' Hearing. Community members who had given statements to the CAVR told their story to the CAVR and the gathered community. Sixty-five sub-district Victims' Hearings were conducted by the CAVR.

Community reconciliation hearings were a major part of the CAVR programme. Pursuant to the CAVR mandate, the objective of these hearings was to assist in the reintegration of former offenders into their communities. Typically, but not always, these related to the 1999 militia violence. Hearings were held in villages in all districts in Timor-Leste. Facilitated by the CAVR, this process combined traditional dispute resolution methods with the formal legal process in an innovative way. The CAVR conducted hearings for 1,404 former perpetrators, in a total of 217 hearings, and we estimate that over 40,000 community members participated in these hearings.

The response to the public hearings of the CAVR was overwhelming. We hope that through this series of booklets more people can share the experience of these national thematic hearings.

Preface The Hearing on Forced Displacement and Famine

The National Public Hearing on Forced Displacement and Famine focused on the great famine of 1977-79. This was the period of the conflicts when the largest number of East Timorese people suffered immense hardship and died.

Timor-Leste was virtually closed off during this period, and this story remains largely untold by those who write about Timor-Leste. So many died, their deaths unrecorded, and those who survived continued to live in a conflict situation: survival remained the priority and there was no safe opportunity to talk of this national tragedy. More than anything, the CAVR hearing aimed to provide a safe opportunity for survivors to relate their experiences, and the experiences of those who perished. This gave the people of Timor-Leste and the international community an opportunity to listen to and learn of these dark days in the nation's history.

The CAVR Final Report will reflect on the causes of this tragedy, and draw conclusions about what institutions bore responsibility. The hearing did not seek to draw such conclusions, but rather to publicly acknowledge the stories of those who testified. Expert testimony from witnesses with particular experience and knowledge of the events of this period was given which permitted clarification of key points. The hearing was one step in a much longer process of research and investigation of these events and the human rights violations associated with them. This research commenced at the community level, with CAVR district teams taking statements from individuals and conducting workshops in villages to understand the impact of these events on communities. The CAVR national office formed a research team to undertake specific research into this theme. They conducted interviews with key people and representatives of organisations, studied documentation from Timor-Leste, Indonesia and international organisations. This research team was Diogo Neto Fraga, Abel dos Santos, Gregoriano Fatima and Gerry Van Klinken.

The CAVR especially acknowledges the contribution of the Catholic Relief Services in making a submission to the CAVR including key documentation and photos from this period. We would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Australian press photographer Peter Rogers, who generously allowed the CAVR to reproduce his photographs taken during a brief trip to Timor-Leste in 1979 with a visiting Australian delegation. These photographs had an important impact internationally at the time; many of them are reproduced in this book.

The women and men selected to give testimony at this hearing told of their experiences in eight districts, including the prison island of Ataúro. Criteria for this selection included seeking to represent the key events, strategies and places which were linked to major displacement and famine in these years. Those selected wanted to give their testimony publicly and felt that the experience could be beneficial to them.

In addition to hearing directly from victims of human rights violations, the CAVR heard expert testimony from Gilman dos Santos, a former Indonesian local government worker and subsequently with the CRS during its emergency relief operations; and from Pat Walsh from Australia, who worked with Australian NGOs during the 1970s and early 1980s seeking international action to relieve the famine and to address its causes.

The hearing itself was a painful event for many people. Survivors recounted the stories of mass deaths in military attacks by air, sea and land, and by starvation, sickness in the mountains or in detention camps. They told of the vulnerability of ordinary people in conflict. Whole families died and communities were devastated. The hearing could provide no easy catharsis to such a tragedy, but there was a feeling that an important story in the nation's history had begun to be told. The CAVR thanks the brave survivors who testified at the hearing.

The CAVR hopes that in future years there will be a permanent memorial to those who perished in the great famine, and educational programmes should be initiated for all East Timorese on this most difficult chapter in our history. It is our hope that this booklet is the beginning of this ongoing process.

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Human Rights and International Law



Human rights are rights that everyone has, regardless of race, age, religion or sex, from the moment of birth until death. These rights cannot be given away, sold or taken away by force. Everybody has the same human rights, just because they are human.

The idea that every person has some kind of basic rights is very old and can be found in societies all around the world. However, the human rights doctrine as it is known today was only developed after the Second World War. Remembering the terrible atrocities that were committed during that war, the governments of the world through the United Nations decided that no person should suffer that way again. On 10 December 1948, they agreed to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which sets out all of the basic rights of human beings. Since this time, these rights have been expanded upon and refined in thousands of international documents and there are now strict legal rules setting out how governments are to treat people.

Sadly, the history of Timor-Leste between 1974 and 1999 is filled with violations of human rights by all sides to the conflicts. We heard in this hearing about the suffering of Timorese people as a result of being displaced from their homes, both to other areas in Timor-Leste and to Indonesia. Forced displacement meant that people lost their homes and belongings and could not grow food in accordance with the seasons. Also, some people were moved by force to less fertile areas, or were prevented from going out of their villages and camps and to find food. This resulted in famine and death. When reading these accounts, it is important to remember the human rights violated when people suffered in this way. Some of these rights include:

Right to life

This is the most important of all of the human rights. Every person has a right to not have their life taken away from them, unless it is clearly within the law. The government has a duty to ensure that its actions do not lead to the unlawful death of its citizens. In times of war, it is wrong for any party to the conflict to kill a person not involved in the fighting.

Right to housing

All people have a right to a home in which they can live in security, peace and dignity. Governments must work towards adequate housing for everyone, and must not do anything that takes peoples' homes away from them, such as forcefully evicting people. The only exception to this is if people are evicted for their own health or safety.

Right to food

All people have the fundamental right to live free from hunger. Governments must ensure that all people have access to essential food that is sufficient, nutritionally adequate and safe. Even in times of war, the different sides to the conflict have a duty to ensure that the civilian population has access to food. They must also not prevent aid organisations from providing food to the people.

Rights during conflict

Under the international laws of war, there are rules about what actions can and cannot be taken during a conflict. Civilians (people who are not taking active part in the fighting) must be protected from the conflict as much as possible. Parties fighting in the conflict are not allowed to starve people as a tactic of war.

Opening Address

Aniceto Guterres Lopes, Chairperson of the CAVR

The theme of today's hearing is of particular importance for all Timorese people and the international community. Materials which have been previously available indicate that enforced displacement and the resulting deprivation of food during the period of the political conflict resulted in the death of up to one third of the Timorese population. If the reports are true, of all of the tragedies of our past this is the most horrific, as it led to the deaths of what has been estimated as hundreds of thousands of our brothers and sisters.

However, until the CAVR was given its mandate it has not been possible to systematically compile information which can test and provide detail to these reports of tragedy. Until now we do not know exactly what took place, and the CAVR has not yet made its findings or conclusions. However we are working hard and have made much progress in uncovering the details of this dark period of our history.

We have been given a mandate by Parliament to seek the truth so that the heroic actions of those in our families who endured great suffering, and those who fell, can be honoured. We seek the truth so that we can teach our children and grandchildren of this noble past in overcoming great odds, and so that we can learn the lessons from this history which will ensure that the same dark shadows never again fall across our beautiful land. We seek the truth so that the wounds of our past are healed, rather than remaining darkly covered and infected, poisoning our hopes and efforts to move into a new future. For this bright new future to be built we need a foundation composed from the strong materials of truth, acceptance and reconciliation. We need to rid ourselves of shadows, unfounded allegations, rumour and hate, which will weaken these foundations, making them crumble under the challenges of our future.

Over the next two days you will hear testimony from those who lived through this period. They will tell you about how the displacement, hunger and death came about, the hardships endured and how they managed to survive. In addition CAVR staff are currently gathering supporting information from throughout Timor-Leste. We have almost completed a programme to visit and collect the details from every graveyard in Timor-Leste so that we may know, in truth, what the terrible toll was. These thousands of details are currently being entered into a computer database to provide us with the tools for analysis. Also in this database are the thousands of statements which witnesses have provided to us, which will also provide us with a factual basis for our analysis.

Evidence is being collected of the policies, actors and actions related to these events and why they were allowed to take place without intervention. Evidence is being collected to clarify exactly what the underlying causes of the tragedy were and whether it appears that persons or institutions were responsible for what took place. Also, during the next two days, you will hear testimony from expert witnesses who will provide some detail of efforts which were made to provide assistance, as well as attempts to focus international attention on the problem, and why this attention did not lead to an international outcry.

Of course, our experiences during 1999 involved hunger as well as a massive displacement of the population. However we are only able to provide an opportunity for a small number of witnesses to give evidence. We have decided that this opportunity to present testimony to the public is best used to focus on the periods which have never yet come before the public eye, when displacement and famine was linked to a massive number of deaths. The issues relating to 1999 are central to the research and considerations of the CAVR and will be included in our Final Report and recommendations.

Witnesses over the next two days will provide testimony about events from the beginning of the conflict until 1985. You will hear evidence from three stages. Four witnesses will give accounts relating to experiences when the population had to flee to the forests following the civil war. They will also give detail in relation to the second period, 1978-79, when people were grouped in camps. Two additional witnesses will speak specifically about their lives in these camps. Five witnesses will provide evidence about the third period, 1984-85, involving forced displacement of the population. We will also hear from Mr Gilman dos Santos concerning the role of the NGO Catholic Relief Services (CRS) during these periods. Mr Pat Walsh will give an account of the information gathered and work done by activists and other relevant bodies in Australia, and other countries, during this time.

The mandate of the CAVR includes establishing the truth regarding past human rights violations, violations of international human rights law and criminal acts. The deprivation of food leading to death is a violation of two of the most fundamental human rights: the right to life and the right to food, as recognised in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Destruction of food sources, such as the burning of fields, deliberate deprivation of food to groups of persons, and the forced removal of people away from available food sources are violations of international law. Even in times of war, armies commit crimes against international law if they intentionally deprive civilian populations of food sources. According to international law, this intentional deprivation of food can constitute a serious international crime, including a crime against humanity, if it is part of a widespread or systematic attack on a civilian population. Forced displacement of a civilian population can also constitute violations of international human rights law.

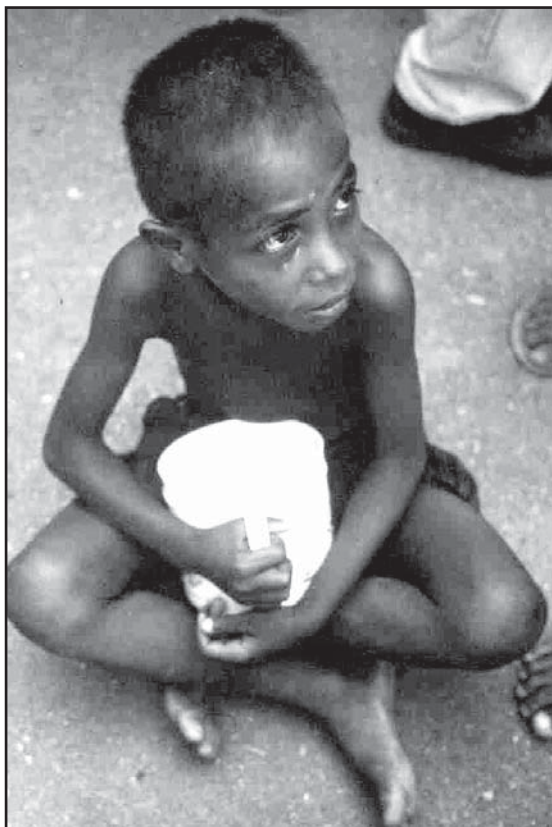
The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* states that every person has a right to freely move within their own country and also to freely leave and to return to their country. Every person also has a right to a home. When there is forced displacement these rights are violated. According to international law serious situations involving forced displacement of civilians, if it results in death, great suffering or serious injury, can also constitute serious offences, including crimes against humanity.

Opening Address Aniceto Guterres Lopes, CAVR Chairperson

Although the CAVR is not a court and does not have the power to make rulings as a court, its mandate does include an investigation of abuses of human rights, international humanitarian law and criminal law. Our Final Report will summarise all our research and investigations into these abuses of human rights and international law and provide an account of what our people experienced from 1974 until 1999.

It is also a very important part of the mandate of the CAVR to look into the context of these violations so that we may provide a more accurate history which can be the basis of reconciliation between parties to the conflict. Each week the CAVR holds community reconciliation hearings in the districts throughout Timor-Leste to help in settling problems between perpetrators and victims of past wrongs. Already we have completed hearings involving over 300 perpetrators, and we expect to complete hearings for more than 1,000 cases by the end of our mandate.

Finally, let me again welcome you to this public hearing and thank you all for your support and help. The CAVR belongs to the people of Timor-Leste and we cannot achieve our goals without all of you.



Archive photo, 1979.



A young victim of the famine in Laga, October 1979.

Introduction

These testimonies are presented in the order in which the witnesses testified. During the two days of hearing, these testimonies were interspersed with expert witness testimonies, which are presented separately in this book.

Most witnesses gave their testimony in Tetum, one of Timor-Leste's official languages. The English and Indonesian versions of this book aim to represent their testimonies as accurately as possible. The paragraphs in italics introducing each testimony provide a brief overview to contextualise the testimony. The text which follows is an edited version of the testimony, based on the original statements of the women and men and their words at the hearing—it is not a summary as such, but rather a selection from the words of each witnesses' testimony, making allowances for translation of course.

Note on the suppression of names of perpetrators

At the time of preparation for publication of this book, National Commissioners were still debating the CAVR policy of naming names of alleged perpetrators in the CAVR Final Report. At the hearing itself, witnesses were advised that it was their right to name names if they wished, but that they should be aware that this could have legal consequences. In general, witnesses did not name alleged perpetrators in the CAVR national hearings.

The method for reproducing this book has been to remove the name of an alleged perpetrator and to substitute 'A'. If more than one alleged perpetrator is named in a testimony, they are listed in alphabetical order, hence 'B', 'C' and so on.

Survivor Testimonies

Marito Nicolau dos Reis

Baucau, Dili and Ataúro Districts; Bali; Cipinang Prison, Jakarta, 1975–1995

Marito Nicolau dos Reis testified that he was a Fretilin member at the time of the Indonesian invasion. He initially worked for the resistance in the forest and after surrendering served the clandestine movement in the cities. Mr dos Reis told how the Indonesian military learned of his clandestine activities, and described capture and exile to Ataúro for 16 months. He gave an account of the suffering of people imprisoned and the abuse of human rights committed by the Indonesian military on the island. Soon after his return to Dili, he reactivated the clandestine movement but, he said, he was once again captured. He told how he was tried by a court in Dili and sentenced to 17 years in prison, and taken to Cipinang Prison in Jakarta to serve this sentence. He told of his release in 1995. Mr dos Reis closed his testimony by focusing on the need for all Timorese people to acknowledge their power to bring change to Timorese society, in order to overcome the legacy of war and violence and promote lasting and true peace in Timor-Leste.



The Carnation Revolution in Portugal led to the Portuguese granting freedom to all its colonies, including Timor-Leste. In response to this the Timorese people formed political groups and parties. The first to be formed were UDT, ASDT, Apodeti, Trabalhista, KOTA and Aditla. The latter had as its goal integration with Australia and was short-lived due to lack of support.

These political groups and parties soon started to fight among themselves. The intensity and violence of the inter-party conflict reached such a point that it came to be referred to as a civil war.

Fretilin gained greater and greater control of Timor-Leste. There was an awareness that an Indonesian invasion was imminent and so Fretilin used its power to prepare for that. Fretilin encouraged the Timorese people to go to the forests in order to fight the invaders so that Fretilin would have a chance to prepare the people politically and morally for the struggle against the enemy and against death by starvation.

The people obeyed Fretilin and went to live in the mountains. Fretilin had comprehensive plans for the administration and instruction of this move, but because the people were forced to move from place to place the plans could not be followed and a level of chaos was the result.

After some time Fretilin decided to encourage the people to come out of the mountains to surrender in the towns and to establish a clandestine movement and support network for the fighters in the forest. Civilians and members of Falintil participated in this plan and moved into the towns.

Some people left the forests and surrendered simply because they could no longer survive in the mountains. I also surrendered and was taken to Ostico by Major Iswanto. Because my brother was Vicente Reis (Sahe) the Indonesians believed I could influence the people in the forest and get them to surrender. So I was sent into the forests to encourage the people to surrender, which I did. But I emphasised that if they came into the towns they could better support Falintil by planting crops to feed the fighters. As a result, many surrendered.

In the towns we tried to establish a clandestine movement, but I was being closely watched by the enemy because of being Sahe's brother. When Falintil members were caught some of them were forced to give information about clandestine contacts in the town. As a result of this I was captured by the army in Ostico and kept in the Flamboyant Hotel for three days.

From there the Indonesian military took us to the island of Ataúro where others had already been exiled. On Ataúro we were kept in a Portuguese primary school building. We were supported by local people and the Church and later the International Red Cross also assisted. One of the reasons for keeping us on Ataúro was to sever our links with Falintil. The fighters' motto was: "The people are the water and Falintil are the fish." We were completely cut off, even from friends and family. While we were kept there the Indonesian military committed many violations against human rights.

I was held on Ataúro for 16 months before being brought to Dili. I started to work for an Indonesian intelligence agent called Major Willem da Costa. As a result I had freedom to enter places like the army's headquarters, military barracks, finance offices and other places, but I was being watched to see how I would deal with those opportunities. With time, the major started to trust me and it was about then I decided to try and reestablish the clandestine activities.

In 1982-1983 I was a "free" prisoner, living with Kasi I Willem da Costa. At that time we reactivated the clandestine movement in Dili. Soon the enemy became suspicious and five of us were imprisoned and warned not to continue with these activities. At the same time, other members of the clandestine movement were captured and they were forced to tell the military that I was their leader in Dili.

As a result of that I was imprisoned again. Later I was taken to Bali for three months with nine other prisoners. Then I was returned to Dili where I was taken to SGI in Colmera for interrogation. I was beaten, kicked, and stepped on with army boots. I was then "tried" in the Dili Courthouse together with the late Mariano Bonaparte, David Dias Ximenes and Albino Lourdes, and sentenced to 17 years prison in Cipinang, Jakarta.

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But by changing the situation we will not change our behaviour unless we can eliminate characteristics which have become a part of us.

We were handcuffed and transported to Indonesia in three groups of 15 people. I was held there until 25 September 1995.

Apart from my story, I would like to talk about some important issues. The political situation, the civil war, and the occupation by Indonesia have provided the opportunity for the people of Timor to commit human rights violations. But by changing the situation we will not change our behaviour unless we can eliminate characteristics which have become a part of us...If we can eliminate these things we can live in peace and love. But if not, this conflict can continue and grow. If we want to improve our land we need to change these things within us and then we will be able to reach out to each other, and to help each other. We need to do this so that we can forgive. Forgive our whole generation. Forgive what was done as part of war. We can still be ourselves, while changing our behaviour.

For example something that I hear my female friends and relatives talking about a lot is domestic violence. I think to address this we need to start by defining love.

I talk of this because I want to help Timor physically and morally. So I take this opportunity to emphasise that not only our enemy committed violence against us, but what we did and do to each other, including in the home, is also violence and needs to stop. It needs to stop in the home, in the church, in the schools.

If we don't take the initiative, if we don't educate ourselves, how will we ever rid our society of this problem and take our nation forward? Not just the politicians have power. Each of us as individuals has the power to create change. If we can eliminate those characteristics that I mentioned, we can live in peace, helping each other, loving each other, caring for each other. Then we can have progress.



Ataúro Island from Dili.

Manuel Carceres da Costa

Lacló, Manatuto District; Aileu District; Metinaro, Dili District, 1975–1978

Manuel Carceres da Costa was in Lacló, Manatuto District, when the Indonesian military invaded Timor-Leste. He told how he fled with people from surrounding communities to the hills of Hatuconan where they organised themselves to provide food.

Mr Carceres told how his community was forced to move from place to place, harassed by the advancing Indonesian military. He testified that the Indonesian military destroyed food gardens and rice paddies and killed livestock, causing starvation. He described the terrible attacks by the US-supplied OV-10 aircraft, used to bomb and shoot at fleeing civilian populations, and of the desperate attempts to flee and to avoid these attacks.

Mr Carceres described being captured in July 1978, when he was sent to a concentration camp in Metinaro near Dili. Without adequate food and water, he said, many died of starvation in the camp. Mr Carceres told how the community was moved back to Lacló later in 1978, but again held in concentration camps without access to adequate food such that starvation and deaths followed. He said that by the time the military allowed a return to home areas, only 400 people from the area were left alive.

Just before Christmas, on 7 December 1975, the Indonesian military (TNI) invaded Dili. People came to Lacló and told us that the TNI had come to Dili and killed many people. They said that the TNI were using tanks and stealing the people's things.

When we heard this we decided to flee to the forests. We hoped that other countries would send help quickly, so we were not afraid to flee to the forest. From 1975 until 1976 the people of Lacló, from both sides of the river, lived in the hills of Hatuconan.

When we fled to the forest in December 1975, everyone felt happy. It was harvest time for rice so we took the harvested rice to the forests so we wouldn't have any food shortages. In the forest we formed two organisations: *Organização Popular da Mulher Timorense* (OPMT) which was a women's organisation affiliated with Fretilin, and *Organização Popular Juventude de Timor* (OPJT) which was a youth organisation. These organisations helped us to co-ordinate activities among the people. For example, we worked together to plant gardens and rice paddies, and we planted maize around the town of Lacló. The Indonesian military had not yet reached Lacló.

In April 1976, the enemy started to enter Lacló. We moved immediately from Hatuconan to Idada. We stayed in a camp, which we named *Be'è Maran* (Dry Water). While there, people started to experience difficulties. They had left their gardens and rice paddies behind and could not harvest the food because the enemy would attack them.

The situation got more and more difficult. At first there was plenty of sago trees so we ate sago. But because more and more people were fleeing to that area, soon the sago ran out. Because of this we moved from Hatuconan back to the town of Lacló. While we were cutting down a sago tree, soldiers came and attacked us. They were about five metres away from us but we did not run. When the military shot a Falintil member by the name of Hermenegildo, we were forced to leave the food behind and run. After that the military occupied that area so that we could not return any more. Our water buffalos and domestic animals were all shot dead or chased away, and our gardens and rice paddies were destroyed.



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In August 1977, when we were staying in a camp in Idada, we buried 80 dead bodies in one day. Particularly the children and the older people died. They died of starvation. They died with swollen and aching stomachs, unable to walk.

In May 1978 the situation became even more difficult. The enemy started attacking from the border. In July 1978 the military began to surround and destroy us from the central-north of Timor-Leste. Troops marched in from Manatuto, Aileu, and Laclubar. So we had to get out of Hatuconan and move to Remexio. From Remexio we went around through Aileu and back to Hatuconan. Many of us died there because they were wounded and couldn't walk any more. Newborn babies also died of starvation. We didn't have time to bury the dead because the enemy was chasing us. We just wrapped them in mats and left them.

During the day we hid. We only moved during the night because the OV-10 warplanes were following us, shooting at us and dropping bombs on us. Many friends, family, and other people died. People also died because of landmines. The OV-10 warplanes shot at defenceless civilians on open fields. Each day the planes came from Baucau at ten o'clock so at that time we would hide. At 11 o'clock they would start showering us with bullets. Then in the afternoon they would return to Baucau. This went on and on.

In order to survive, we killed water buffalos. We didn't know whose they were but we had to eat. When we were surrounded and attacked in July 1978, none of us surrendered. We hid in Ilimano. In the mornings the Indonesian military came to bomb us so that we couldn't escape. There were about 20 of us, including Jacinto Alves, now a CAVR National Commissioner. Eventually we were captured by soldiers of Battalion 315. They suspected that we were leaders in the forest. We were held at the command post and interrogated by Captain Mudi. They examined our hands and asked us whether we had carried weapons in the forest. We said that we had only taught in the forest [ie They denied it].

The Indonesian military stopped beating us. We stayed in Ilimano for one day, and on 21 July 1978 we were brought to Kotis for interrogation. We told them that we were from the seminary so the Indonesian military ordered us back to Metinaro. When we arrived in Metinaro they ordered us to stand in a line and register our names. Then they gave us mouldy maize, which was like sand, and we were imprisoned in Metinaro. We were surrounded and not free to move. It was very difficult to plant a garden. We had to stay around Metinaro. When we were in the concentration camp in Metinaro many people died of starvation. They didn't give us any rice and there was no medicine.

After six months the International Red Cross came to Metinaro. They distributed milk, maize, rice, and canned fish. This didn't help many people. While we were in the forest we didn't eat salty or oily food so when some people ate the canned fish or drank the milk their bodies swelled and their stomachs ached. In the concentration camp we buried one or two people every day.

In August and September 1978, the District and Sub-district level administration of Lacló was established. Mr Inácio became the sub-district administrator of Lacló. He encouraged us to move back to our hometowns in Lacló. The district administrator also encouraged this. But instead of taking us back to Lacló they held us in Manatuto, near the bridge. We were in Manatuto for over a month. People started dying from illness and starvation. I kept asking the military to let us return to Lacló.

After celebrating Indonesian Independence Day on 17 August, the soldiers brought the men back to Lacló to prepare a place to stay. In October the women were allowed to return to Lacló. We walked to Lacló, taking maize for food.

In Lacló we had more problems. The soldiers from Battalion 405 who were guarding us did not let us return to our original land. The military ordered us to stay in concentration camps in the town of Lacló, which led to even more death by starvation. In one day 15-20 people died. How could we find food when we were being held in a rocky mountainous area? We were held in that concentration camp for three months. More than 300 people from Hatuconan died. After many people had died, the Indonesian military sent the people back to their original land. By that time only about 400 people were left.

I want to say to you all, especially to those who are educated, listen to those who suffered in this time, especially the widows and those who continue to have difficulties in their lives. I thank the CAVR for allowing us to talk of this time. It is an honour to speak here, as there were so many who suffered and died and who cannot be here.

*When we were
in the concentration
camp in Metinaro
many people died of
starvation.*

*They didn't give us
any rice and there
was no medicine.*



CAVR National Commissioners Rev
Agustinho Vasconcelos, Deputy Chair-
person Father Jovito de Araujo and
Chairperson Aniceto Guterres Lopes.

Merlindi da Conceição

Liquiça District, 1976–1978

Merlindi da Conceição was forced into hiding by the Indonesian military invasion of Timor-Leste. Sra da Conceição gave spare, painful testimony of how her family hid from Indonesian military campaigns in the mountains. In the space of two years, she said, her grandmother, mother and her two young siblings all died due to lack of food and basic medicines. She tried vainly to help them with traditional medicines.



When the Indonesian military took control of the area where we lived, my grandmother, mother, younger sisters and brothers and I fled to the forests around Tehui, Hatuquesi. My grandmother, Maria Correia dos Santos, who was 60 years old, died there on 5 May 1976 due to lack of food and medicine. We buried her in there, in the hiding place.

Two years later, in 1978, my mother Domingas da Conceição, who was 47 years old, died of hunger in Darutu, Vatuvou, Maubara. She had also been sick but there were no medicines. I gave my mother traditional medicine but this did not help. The reason she had no food or medicine was that there was a large military invasion in the area of Hatuquesi.

One month after my mother died my younger brother, Rosalino da Conceição, who was 12 years old, also died of starvation. At the time of his death we were living in the forests and only had koto tahan (bean leaves) to eat. My brother couldn't bear the bitterness of the leaves, so he became ill. I gave him traditional medicines that I found in the forest but it didn't help, and he died. He was buried in Darutu.

On 26 September 1978, just three months after Rosalino's death, my younger sister Elisa Bete, who was just two years old, also died in Malaebui, Darubatlao, Maubara. She died in the same way as Rosalino.

*One month after my mother
died my younger brother, Rosalino da
Conceição, who was 12 years old,
also died of starvation.*

Edmundo da Silva

Lautem District, 1975–1980s

Edmundo da Silva was very young at the time of the Indonesian military invasion. In 1975-76 his community spent a year living in the forest, where his mother died of heart attack and many others around him died of starvation. As a child he worked as a courier for Fretilin. He told how in 1977 the people of his area surrendered and were taken to the Parlamento Sub-district concentration camp where more died of starvation and illness. He said that in 1979 they were allowed to return to their villages, but because of their involvement in the clandestine movement they were forced into a concentration camp in Com. Mr da Silva told how civilian communities lived under intense Indonesian military control throughout the 1980s, and how this eased somewhat only in the 1990s.

When the Indonesians invaded Timor-Leste I was still very young. We fled to the forest and stayed in the area around Com, in the villages of Kulur and Leur for over a year. The situation was very difficult, especially for those of us in the forest. It was very difficult to find food. Many people died of hunger. Some were shot by the Indonesian military, and still others died because they fell out of trees.

While in the forest my mother died of a heart attack. During that time I heard that my mother's sister had also died. Because I was still young I was not armed. Instead I worked as a Fretilin *estafeta* (courier) for Commander Ijino Pereira and Anselmo Fernandes.

In 1977, most of the people in the area of Com and Asalaino surrendered to the soldiers of Battalion 512. At the time I didn't understand why we had to surrender to the Indonesian military.

Battalion 512 took us to the beach at Com where we stayed for less than a week. Then the Indonesian military took us, and the people from Lautem, to the Sub-district of Parlamento. We stayed in the Parlamento concentration camp for more than a year and suffered a lot. We were not allowed to go more than 100 metres from the camp. As a result over 2,000 people suffered starvation. Each day two to five people died of hunger. The children and the elderly were the most vulnerable.

While we were at the concentration camp of Parlamanto, the military did not provide any food at all. When we helped them unload rice from the boat in Lautem they gave us one or two cans of rice. That was all we had to eat. Those who did not help unload rice did not get anything.

In 1979, after many people had died of starvation and illness, the sub-district head, Edmundo da Costa, asked Battalions 512 and 745 to let us return to our villages—Muapuso, Vailovaya, and Lohomata—so that we could work in our gardens again. It was August, which is the start of the planting season. The TNI agreed to let us go home. When we returned to the village, we planted our gardens and tended our animals free from military control. Then we started to think about those who were still fighting in the forest.

Over 2,000 people suffered starvation. Each day two to five people died of hunger.

The children and the elderly were the most vulnerable.

The soldiers and their assistants started to burn the things in our houses like food supplies and clothes. The military assistants and soldiers also shot dead all of our animals.

In 1979, when the Sub-district Head ordered us to go back to our villages, Xanana Gusmão was also hiding around Com. We kept contact with Xanana in the forest and started building a clandestine movement. We started to support Falintil by sending food, medicine and clothing to them in the forest, and by following the orders of the underground movement, which we called *Ajuda Nan Maran* (assisting dried meat). We kept up this contact for three months.

The soldiers from Battalions 512 and 745 found out about the clandestine network we had built. They captured all the people from Muapuso, Vailovaya and Lohomata. They forced us to move back to the village of Com. They said, "You have to return to Com immediately. Here you continue to assist Falintil and if you do that the fighting will never end."

The soldiers and their assistants started to burn the things in our houses, like food supplies and clothes. The military assistants and soldiers also shot dead all of our animals. They ordered us to walk to Com which was about 20km away and they beat and kicked us all the way there.

In the concentration camp in Com we suffered a lot, even compared to when we were in the Sub-district of Parlamento. The Indonesian military would not let any one go more than 100 metres from the camp. Anyone who did was immediately shot dead. Because of this rule we could not get any food, and many of us died of starvation.

Many of my siblings and family members, including Irmao Virgilio, Oscar and Duarte, were caught by the military and killed on the beach in Com. Many people from the villages of Rasa and Bauro were also shot and buried in Com. The soldiers from Battalions 512 and 745 controlled us day and night, whether we were in or outside the camp. I also saw the military interrogating a member of my family, whose husband they had killed. But I didn't see what they did to her after they took her out of the camp.

While staying in the village of Com all we had to eat was the fruit of the tamarind tree, which we boiled. Before we lived in the camp we did not know about the tamarind fruit. We discovered it when we were cleaning the goat stalls. At that time more than 100 people died. The reason we did not have enough food was that we were not allowed to plant a garden. We were also forbidden to look for fish on the beach of Tutuala. They said: "If you go to Tutuala you will make contact with your friends in the forest."

We stayed in the village of Com for six months. In 1980 the International Red Cross started to give us maize. This food was distributed directly by the employees of the International Red Cross. We received their assistance only three times. The military guarded us from the hills behind Com.

In 1980 we looked for things to eat in our home village. We could not go there every day as we had to have a letter of authorisation from the military post. The letter of authorisation had the date, month and year of its validity. We had to take it with us when we went and show it when we returned. We had to leave together and were only given one hour. If we came late we were shot. In our village we only found coconuts and bananas.

In the 1990s we felt a bit more free. We no longer needed a letter of authorisation to search for food. We were just guarded by the soldiers from Battalions 512 and 745. We went out and planted gardens in the hills around Com and looked for fish on the beach at Com. Many died in the years after we returned to our home village. We made new graves and soon those graves were filled too.

*The soldiers from
Battalions 512 and 745
controlled us day and
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were in or outside
the camp.*



*Audience members at the Forced
Displacement and Famine Hearing*

Antonio Pires

Mauxiga Village, Kablaki region, Ainaro District, 1975–1982

Antonio Pires was a supporter of Fretilin in 1975. He told how his village of Mauxiga in the central mountains supported Fretilin generally, and how on 11 August 1975, when the UDT party seized power, they were unable to enter the village. As the Indonesian military neared Aileu in 1976, he said 7,000 people from the area fled to the foot of Mount Kablaki. He gave an account of many killed by heavy weapons and bombing from planes, forcing him to move to the area around Alas.

Mr Pires described his role in the clandestine movement from 1979, when he returned to the Mauxiga area. He told about the planned uprising of 1982, and of how the Indonesian military wreaked terrible violence against the population of Mauxiga when these plans were exposed. He fled to the mountains, but told how civilians from the surrounding villages were taken captive and tortured. He said the population of the village of Mauxiga was moved to the area of DoteK. He was later captured and held for 40 days. He returned to his family in DoteK, but they were only able to return home to Mauxiga a year later.



In 1975 three parties came into the area of Mauxiga, Ainaro District: UDT, Fretilin and Apodeti. The majority of the people supported Fretilin because Fretilin leaders said they would fight for independence.

On 11 August 1975 a coup d'état took place. We formed a command centre in Lesuati in order to support Fretilin's fight against UDT in Ainaro. After the [Fretilin] counter-coup the people of Mauxiga did not run to the forest because we were Fretilin. In Mauxiga, UDT had no power. The Apodeti party also sent their flag to Mauxiga but the people sent it back to Apodeti in Ainaro. All we wanted was independence.

In 1976, after the Indonesian military came to Aileu, we became the Fretilin militia in Mauxiga. Our command centre was still in Lesuati. We fought the Indonesian military (TNI) in Aileu and six of our friends died. We returned to Mauxiga because we lost the battle with the TNI. After that, the war came closer and closer to Ainaro. When we could not hold out against the TNI any longer, the Mauxiga Fretilin militia and the people of Mauxiga fled to the foot of Mount Kablaki, in Ainaro. There were about 7,000 of us in hiding there.

When the enemy reached Ainaro we tried to stop them from coming into the area of Kablaki. We waited at the edge of each of the rivers and fought them. This made it harder for them to come into the area for a while, but then the enemy started using heavy weapons, tanks, artillery shelling, and bazookas from the top of Mount Flecha, Manumera and Bleheto. The enemy eventually managed to get into the Mount Kablaki region. The battle continued for three days and three nights and caused many deaths. But we kept resisting so that the enemy could not have easy access to the Kablaki area.

In 1977, my brother who was a Fretilin commander surrendered to the enemy. He came by plane with the enemy toward our hiding place. After he had shown them our hiding place, warplanes bombed us for three days and three nights. In the end it was destroyed. Many people had minor wounds, others were seriously wounded and died. After that we moved from the area around Mount Kablaki to the area around Alas.

Two years later, in 1979, we held a meeting with Commander Guido/Caribuana, Julio Sarmento and Assistant Solsole in the area of Buahfu, Alas. In that meeting we decided that I should return to the area around Mount Kablaki to organise the clandestine movement.

When I arrived in the Mauxiga area, I went to the house of the village head, who then took me to the Koramil in Mauxiga. The Koramil confiscated and checked all my belongings and ordered my hair cut but gave me permission to stay in Mauxiga. In Mauxiga, I began to organise the clandestine movement. I started making contact with Commander Venançio Braz and Mauhunu.

Through this connection we formed four communities by the name of *Nafatin*, *Lases*, *Maufehuk* and *Cacao*. These names have meanings. We called one community “*Nafatin*” because the struggle continued. “*Lases*” means to avoid, meaning we would not avoid danger or fear. “*Maufehuk*” literally means yams, but is used as slang meaning “stupid person.” We named the community *Maufehuk* because there were no educated people. Everyone was stupid. “*Cacao*” means that we had to be aware, because the enemy lived among the people. Once these communities were formed, we set up a network in the community of *Nafatin* in order to be able to have connection among all the people of Mauxiga.

By August 1982, the Fretilin leaders and resources were getting weaker and fewer. So the people of Mauxiga staged a resistance to assist them.

The Indonesian military suspected us of having “two faces,” and when we held a meeting in Ailermale a spy for the TNI came to the meeting. He reported our plans. Because of this the TNI caught 12 people, including my secretary, and took them to Ainaro. I fled and hid with the commander of the struggle in the hiding place called Sismer near Mount Kablaki.

Members of the communities were captured, including the children and the elderly.

They were taken to the Koramil where they were brutally and cruelly tortured.

Antonio Pires

The people of Mauxiga fled to the foot of Mount Kablaki, in Ainaro. There were about 7,000 of us in hiding there.

All the members of the four communities which we had formed were captured, including the children and the elderly. They were taken to the Koramil where they were brutally and cruelly tortured. They were stripped naked, beaten with sticks, burnt with cigarette butts, given electric shocks, tied with rope, hung from trees, stabbed with spears, drowned in water, tortured in the heat of the sun, raped, and some were buried alive.

After Koramil tortured all the members of the community, they moved them all, including my wife and child, to the village of Dotik in Alas. One month later the military started making attacks in the forests. They captured me at Mount Kablaki where I had been hiding with Falintil. The soldiers took me and punished me at the Kodim in Same for 40 days. Then they ordered me to return to the village of Dotik to live with my family. We remained in Dotik for one year before being moved back to Mauxiga.



Civilians were forced to flee air and sea attacks, and were kept constantly on the move.

Abilio dos Santos Belo

Mauxiga Village, Ainaro District; Ataúro, 1975–1984, 1999

Abilio dos Santos Belo was a student in Dili at the time of the Indonesian military invasion of Timor-Leste. He gave testimony concerning events and violations from 1975-1999. After the invasion he fled to his village of Mauxiga. He described how he joined the Fretilin armed resistance, and how when the Indonesian military eventually overcame the Mount Kablaki resistance he was captured and forced to be a bearer for them.

Mr dos Santos Belo testified about his subsequent involvement in the clandestine resistance and of his capture in July 1982. He described the Indonesian military reaction to a Falintil attack on 20 August 1982, when they violently cracked down on the civilian population of Mauxiga. He and his colleagues were taken to Ataúro, where they were held for over two years. He said conditions were terrible but improved after they were visited by the International Red Cross. Mr dos Santos Belo said they returned to Ainaro District, but they were held in poor conditions until the then Governor Mário Carrascalão intervened.

In the late 1980s Mr dos Santos Belo rejoined clandestine activities while holding an Indonesian civil servant position. He testified about the formation of the Mahidi militia in 1999, and of how the local community sought to find a way to satisfy the requirement to provide men for the militia but at the same time support the Falintil resistance. He told how after the announcement of the results of the Popular Consultation on 4 September 1999, the people of Mauxiga once again fled to the forests at the foot of Mount Kablaki.

In 1975, when the coup d'état and counter-coup occurred, I was still in school in Dili. When Indonesia invaded I was active in the organisation *Unetim* (*União Nacional dos Estudantes de Timor/National Association of Timorese Students*). After the invasion I returned to my hometown in Mauxiga.

In 1976, the ABRI entered Builico, in Ainaro, and then Mauxiga. The people of Mauxiga all fled to the foot of Mount Kablaki. While there, I worked in the resistance as “Fretilin militia” until 1977. Then I moved to the Intervention and Destruction Platoon of the Forces.

On 7 November 1977, the Indonesian military started to enter Mount Kablaki. The armed resistance weakened, and then Kablaki was destroyed. The situation got so bad that the armed resistance had to move to the area around Alas, Same. In the end we were captured. The Indonesian military placed me in Hansip (Civil Military Force) but I was just an assistant, a *TBO* (*Tenaga Bantuan Operasi—Operation Assistant*). My work involved following the soldiers, getting rice from Ainaro, and providing the army on Mount Kablaki with water for cooking, drinking, bathing and so on.

Because I had always wanted to get an education, in 1978 or 1979, I requested permission from the Koramil commander to resign from working with Hansip in Mauxiga. He agreed. I returned to being a regular citizen again.

In 1980, we contacted our relatives who were still hiding on Mount Kablaki, such as Commander Caribuana, Julio Sarmento, and Mauhunu in the areas around Ailermali. On 3-5 March 1981, Xanana held a large conference in an area to the east. I do not know exactly where. Many of us participated in that conference and after it was over we went back to Mauxiga.



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they moved us...*

*We lived in Ataúro
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very hot.*

Soon after the conference, Xanana ordered people to come looking for us in Mauxiga. He had some work for us to do. Xanana ordered us to start clandestine activities in Mauxiga. Our link to Xanana was through Commander Venançio Braz and Mauhunu, who were part of Haksolok National Leadership.

On 6 July 1982, we held a meeting in Ailermali, Mauxiga, to discuss ways of improving the clandestine work. Details of this meeting were somehow leaked to the enemy and soon after that we were captured.

On 10 July 1982, the Koramil and Hansip of Hatu Builico captured 16 people (14 men and two women), and brought us to Kodim in Ainaro. After taking us there, they put us in a prison for special prisoners. The Koramil also held investigations and tortured us one by one. I was the only one that was not beaten by the Koramil and Kasi I. My friends were beaten until they were covered with blood. Some died in prison. Some survived because an Indonesian military doctor gave them injections and medicine. The soldiers also harassed and examined the family members who visited us in prison and brought us food. They also ate the food that our family brought.

On 20 August 1982, Falintil Commanders Venançio Braz and Mauhunu along with their followers staged an attack in Hatu Builico and Mauxiga, in Ainaro. We could not do anything because we were in prison. We thought we were just going to die. After the attack, the soldiers started to arrest the people of Mauxiga. Some were imprisoned in the Ainaro Kodim. Several were taken and killed in Builico, which is part of Ainaro Mau-Ulo III. They tortured people cruelly, as well as killing them. They also killed all the domestic animals.

On 29 August 1982, the Indonesian military took us to Dili in two cars. In the cars they tied our feet and hands. When we arrived in Dili, we were taken to the Balide prison. At three o'clock in the morning on 31 August 1982, the soldiers took us to the harbour in Dili.

At the harbour someone said: "The Government is not going to punish you. It is because you are citizens of Mauxiga and Dare and the situation in your area is not safe the Government is sending you to Ataúro."

Soon the military ordered us to get in a ferryboat. In the boat I saw my older brothers and sisters, my mother and my grandmother. We arrived in Ataúro on the morning of 1 September 1982. Friends who had arrived earlier welcomed us. Some of them asked for information so we told them about the situation in Mauxiga.

When Koramil heard that there were two Portuguese journalists intending to visit Ataúro they moved us. But they did not move us to the prison, because the prisons were all full. We lived in Ataúro town. A lot of children and older people were sick and many died because it was very hot. One of my relatives, Julio Morais, was seriously wounded. He had been tortured in Dare, Ainaro by being hung by his legs with his head hanging down like a pig. Two journalists, one man and one woman, came and saw the conditions of the prisoners and then left again.

We lived like this for three months. During this imprisonment we suffered a lot from lack of food, medicine and clothes. The only food we had was one can of mouldy maize for each family each day, which the Indonesian military gave us. After three months the International Red Cross arrived in Ataúro. Our lives began to get much better. It felt like heaven. Everything changed. We had all kinds of food such as rice, fish, canned milk, medicines, mung beans and other things.

In October 1984, the people held on Ataúro were returned to Dili. All of us from Ainaro went together on the boat. When we arrived at the harbour in Dili the military was waiting for us with 11 cars. Ten of the cars were for people and one was for packages of cooked rice, which we ate on the way to Ainaro.

When we arrived in Ainaro, we were taken to Bonuk which is between Zumalai and the village of Cassa. In Bonuk we thought we were all going to die. Soon after we arrived children started to die, followed by the elderly. Every day two or three people died, including one of my older brothers, Mateus de Araújo. We were there for two weeks.

Our situation was so bad that we were visited by the Governor of Timor-Leste, Sr Mário Viegas Carrascalão, and officials from Ainaro, including the district administrator, the Kodim, police and *Nanggala*.

Governor Mário Carrascalão was angry. He said: "I request you to return them to their hometowns immediately. If not, the United Nations will force me to do it because these people are also a part of the international community."

The military said to the Governor: 'It would be better to move them to Cassa.'

Sr Mário was furious. He said: "I don't want that and there is no need for that. I want these people returned to their hometowns."

Not long after this visit a military vehicle took us to Ainaro, and then some of us were taken to Mauxiga. The prisoners from Ataúro had to stay in the city of Ainaro. After that they took us to live in Bulico Mau-Ulo III which was known as Jakarta II because it was a place where dead bodies were often taken.

Not long after staying in Bulico, the International Red Cross came to visit us. One month after they left, the soldiers ordered us back to Dare. When we arrived in Dare we still lived as prisoners. We had no freedom to move around and were always under suspicion. At that time our friends from the forests wanted to use me in the clandestine work to assist the resistance. I was afraid of the military and felt unsafe, so in 1987 I moved from Dare to Mauxiga. In Mauxiga the friends found me again. I did not want to die so I decided to move to Dili. In Dili I worked in a project. After I had worked in Dili for a long time, I missed my mother and father, and so I returned to Mauxiga.

In 1988, I received a letter from friends in the forest, who asked me to continue to work in the clandestine movement. So I became active in the clandestine movement again. In 1991, Konis Santana came to Mauxiga and reestablished the clandestine work. At that time I was appointed by the Indonesian government to be the secretary of the village of Mauxiga. At the same time I was the secretary of the underground movement and channelled funds to our friends in the forests.

*The only food we
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Abilio dos Santos Belo

*In Bonuk
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*Soon after we arrived
children started to die,
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Every day two or three
people died.*

In 1999, the Mahidi militia began to form in Hatu Builico and nobody stopped them. So the heads of the villages of Mulo and Nunumoge and I held a meeting, and decided to accept the militia in order to protect the people from harm. And so we also formed a Mahidi militia in Hatu Builico. At the insistence of the Ainaro Koramil we named the militia in Mauxiga the Mahidi *Mauxiga*. The Kodim, the Koramil and the Mahidi leaders from Ainaro inaugurated this militia.

After the inauguration, they asked the youth to join the Mahidi Ainaro. We sent 200 young people from Mauxiga in order to work with them. We told the youth from Mauxiga who were sent to participate: "You may go...but know who you are. Do not do anything that could hurt our friends in the forest."

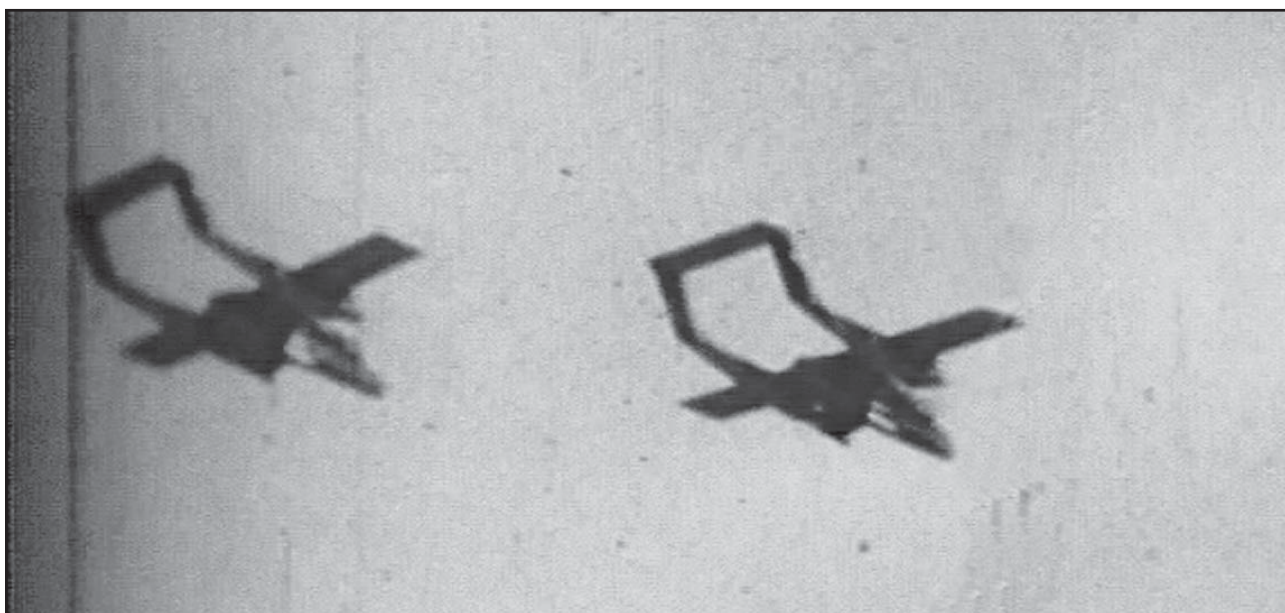
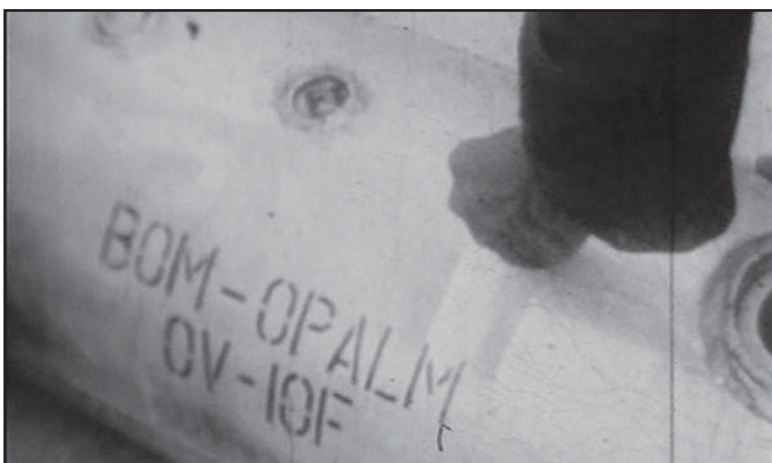
On 4 September 1999, when we heard the announcement that the pro-independence side had won, all the people of Mauxiga fled to the forests at the foot of Mount Kablaki, until Interfet arrived in Timor-Leste.



*Expert witness Pat Walsh and
Minister for Foreign Affairs and
Co-operation Jose Ramos-Horta
at the Public Hearing.*



The CAVR heard testimonies of US-supplied OV-10 Bronco aircraft attacking civilians with napalm in the 1970s. The OV-10 Broncos were known as Scorpions, used to drop OPALM—Russian-made napalm. OPPOSITE and BELOW: Indonesian military promotional video of air operations in Timor-Leste in the 1970s, a copy of which is in CAVR Archive.



João Sereno

Covalima District, 1975–1980s

In 1974 João Sereno was part of the founding group of the local Fretilin branch. He testified about the lead-up to the UDT action of August 1975, when he was imprisoned for ten days, and then the Fretilin counter-action.

Sr Sereno recalled the airborne assault on Suai by Indonesian paratroops in 1977, when he said the civilian population fled to the mountains. He said they were constantly being kept on the move to flee the military and it was not possible to harvest food crops, with the result of mass starvation among the population. He described attacks by plane, which terrified the civilian population and resulted in people fleeing and having to abandon loved ones to save themselves.



In September 1974 six of us from Suai held a meeting in Buamata. Our goal was to form a branch of Fretilin, which we supported because Fretilin was struggling for independence. I was appointed to be a member of the Fretilin delegation, which was responsible for organising the people from the area of Suai Camenasa. Almost all the people in that area were Fretilin supporters.

On 11 August 1975, UDT staged their coup d'état in Suai. They caught me and put me in prison for ten days. On 22 August 1975 Fretilin staged a counter-coup so my friends and I were released.

Two years later, in 1977, the Indonesian military parachutists came down in Suai. We fled to the forest around Jova, Suai, with the Fretilin co-ordinator, assistant, and officers, and the people who supported independence from Camenasa, Beco, Labarai, Lela and Asumaten.

We stayed in the area around Jova for almost three years. In 1977 the situation became more difficult and our movement was more and more restricted. We moved to the area of Beco, in Halik, where many people died. Some people were killed by mines and others died of starvation. Often we could not bury the bodies. Some people died sitting up and at first we thought they were just ill. It was only when we tried to lift or carry them we would realise that a person had died.

When we heard the warplanes coming, we were very frightened. We just ran over the top of people who had been shot. Parents abandoned their young children and families abandoned the elderly who could not run. We had to do this to save ourselves.

When the Indonesian military came into Beco, we fled to Labarai. Afterward we returned to Jova. Hundreds had died in Jova. They did not die because they were shot by the military or hit by a bomb. They died because they had been surrounded and could not find food. They died of starvation. Every day two to four people would die, most often the children and the elderly.

We planted gardens but, when harvest season came, the enemy entered our area and we had to flee, leaving our gardens behind. In order to stay alive we had to steal food from other people's gardens. We stole things like sweet potatoes, yams and other roots. When the situation became very difficult we looked for taro. We also looked for *maek* which is a kind of taro that is usually fed to pigs. Its sap can cause itching and skin problems. We also looked for *kotomoruk* which is a kind of soybean. We had to eat these to survive.

*Hundreds had died...
They didn't die because
they were shot by the
military or hit by a bomb.
They died because they
had been surrounded and
could not find food.
They died of starvation...
most often the children
and the elderly.*



*Starvation, location unknown,
Timor-Leste (circa 1979).*

Maria José da Costa

Manatuto and Manufahi Districts, 1977–1983

Maria José da Costa of Same, Manufahi, was a 13-year-old student in Dili at the time of the Indonesian military invasion. She was on vacation in Soibada, Manatuto, when the Indonesian military attacked Dili—so, she remained in Soibada until 1977, when the TNI reached the area. Together with her community she fled to the forest.

Sra da Costa testified about the efforts of Timorese communities in the mountains to organise and care for each other. She told of how she taught children, and was a member of a commission aimed at assisting the most vulnerable and preventing illness.

Sra da Costa described the encirclement attacks by the Indonesian military on the civilian population in the mountains. From air, sea and land, she told of relentless attacks against civilian populations who had to keep moving all the time, leaving behind the elderly, the sick and the wounded. She told of her capture in 1978 and of being held under tight military control in camps in the Betano area for five years. She said that these were years of starvation and illness due to military control and the prevention of normal food-growing practices.



In 1975 I was a student in Dili. At the time of the Indonesian invasion I was on school vacation in Soibada, Manatuto. I could not return to Dili because the Indonesian military were there.

In 1976, we were still in Soibada because the Indonesian military had not yet reached the area. They arrived in Soibada in 1977. When they arrived everyone fled to the forest in the area of Leitula, Soibada. At that time I was 13 years old. Even though I was young, I taught reading and writing to the children in the Leitula area. Soon after we moved to Leitula the Indonesians attacked so we moved back to Fatuberlieu, in Alas. In Fatuberlieu, I continued to teach the children. We also farmed together. We were trying to help the elderly and young children, who were suffering and dying.

In 1977, we moved to Lacudalu, in Fatuberlihu. In Lacudalu I was part of a commission called *Comissão de Apoio e Solidaridade* (CAS) which means the Support and Solidarity Commission. This Commission tried to help refugees who had come from the central northern area. It helped those who were hungry or ill. It also assisted in burying those who had died and it worked to prevent illness. There were only ten of us in the Commission. We were trained by Assistant Soimali who has since died. When we did the work of the Commission we took turns. Five people worked for one week, and five the next.

Assistant Soimali was replaced by Assistant Seran from Bobonaro. The Commission continued to give assistance to the refugees in Sarin, Alas and Fukiran, Fatuberlieu. We stayed in Fukiran and Sarin for one month. After that the Commission's work ended, because the enemy attacked and people scattered to save themselves.

In 1978, the enemy surrounded us in Dolok and many people died due to starvation. All the food supplies the people had were burnt. They surrounded us by attacking from the sea with warships, from the air with warplanes and on land by burning the dry grass and sending in the army.

At that time it was August, the dry season. The army made big fast burning fires by spraying gasoline over the tall grass. Many died because they could not escape the fire surrounding us. The only time we could escape was in the middle of the night when the Indonesian soldiers were resting in their camps. As we tried to escape, bullets rained down on us from the ships at sea. I saw many people burn to death, including my grandmother. As she burned she screamed, asking for water to drink because she was so hot. The fire was burning all the way up to her hair. All I could do was tie three water containers around her neck. Then we had to continue so that we could get out of that area ourselves. We couldn't help each other. We were victims of the circumstances.

After we got out we saw old people who had been left by their families. The men wore their best clothes, and hung belak from their necks, and caibauk and golden bracelets on their arms. The women were wearing gold earrings and necklaces, and had black scarves over their heads, as if they were going to mass. We could not do anything to help because the enemy kept chasing us. After we escaped from the circle they continued to chase us. With support from the sea, they herded us onto the plateau. We were forced to run, and we scattered in all directions. Then the enemy caught us.

They surrounded us by attacking from the sea with warships, from the air with warplanes and on land by burning the dry-grass and sending in the army...

Many died because they could not escape the fire.

Maria José da Costa

*As we tried to escape,
bullets rained down on
us from the ships at sea.
I saw many people burn
to death, including my
grandmother.*

*As she burned she
screamed, asking for
water to drink.*

We were captured by soldiers of Linud (Airborne) 700 in Dolok and taken to Betano. It was fortunate that I was taken in Same. If I had surrendered or been captured in Soibada then maybe I would have died as many people knew me there.

While in Betano we were not allowed to go beyond the Karau-Ulun River to plant our gardens. Even within the boundary we had to get permission to be out for a certain amount of time. When we returned, even when we were on time, the military always suspected us of having contact with people in the forests. The soldiers controlled us very tightly. They used various forms of intimidation. One evening they brought a list and called everyone on that list including five of my male cousins. They were called by the military to build the main road, but they never came back. No-one witnessed what happened so we do not know whether they died or not.

When we went to plant our gardens we had to stay within the city limits. Because of this many people starved to death. The dead were buried just wrapped in a mat. There were medicines but not enough. As time passed, more and more people died of illness and of starvation. Then the soldiers started giving us mouldy maize, but it was not enough to feed a family. We stayed in Betano for five years. Then I moved to Same with my husband who worked there.



*Maria José da Costa
and Manuel Carceres.*



Laga, Baucau District (1979). Civilians who surrendered from the mountains in the 1970s were held in detention camps by the Indonesian Military. Indonesian aid was inadequate, and international aid provided by Catholic Relief Services and the ICRC was too late for many people.

Fransisco Soares Pinto

Iliomar, Lautem District, 1978–1979

Francisco Soares Pinto testified about how his community fled to Mount Matebian when the Indonesian military invaded in 1975, and how in November 1978 they eventually surrendered. Initially held in the mountain town of Baguia, they were ordered back to their hometown of Iliomar. Mr Soares Pinto described how Iliomar was completely empty of people when they arrived, as all the people had fled to the forest.

Between 1979 and 1984 Mr Soares Pinto said that the community of Iliomar lived in a TNI-controlled concentration camp. He said that movement was totally regulated, which resulted in an inability to plant or to look for food, with subsequent large-scale starvation and death. He said that children and the elderly were especially affected.



On 29 November 1978, we surrendered to the Indonesian military on Mount Matebian. The TNI took us to the Sub-district of Baguia in Baucau, where we stayed in a concentration camp. Then the Indonesian military ordered us to return to our hometowns so we lined up to walk back to Iliomar, in Los Palos.

We arrived in Iliomar in December 1978 and found the area empty. There was not a single person there, because everyone had fled to the forest. So we decided to stay around Iliomar for a while. There were about 6,000 of us.

At the beginning of our stay in Iliomar our life was relatively free. We were allowed to come and go from the concentration camp in order to find food.

On 28 December 1978, the Indonesian military from Battalion 328 arrived in Iliomar. Two days later they ruled that we were not allowed to go more than 1km from the concentration camp. Because of this restriction we could no longer find food. The result was a very severe famine.

In order to survive we ate coconuts, but they soon ran out. After the coconuts were finished, there was nothing left to eat so, one by one, people started to die of starvation. People cut down banana trees and cooked the inside of the trunk for food. Usually banana stalks are used as food for pigs. Many of the people who ate the banana stalks got *beriberi* and cholera. Because there weren't any medicines, 5 to 10 people died each day. In one week 40-50 people would die, including children, adults and the elderly.

All day and night you could hear people crying, all over the camp, because people had died. In each grave two to four bodies were buried. I estimate that about 200 people from Iliomar died of starvation in 1978.

In December 1979 assistance from the International Red Cross (ICRC) started to arrive. This assistance continued until 1981. They distributed rice, maize, clothes, medicines, milk and soap. Because of this help we felt a bit better but there were still people dying, especially among the children and the elderly. In one day up to three people would die of cholera.

In 1984 the Indonesian military gave us permission to leave the concentration camp and plant our gardens and work in the rice paddies. To leave the camp you had to have a letter of authorisation and be accompanied to the gardens and rice paddies by the Indonesian military or the military's civil forces (Hansip). When we returned we had to report back to the military post in Iliomar. And when we did not report back we were tortured, beaten, kicked, and some people even disappeared.

*All day and night
you could hear people
crying, all over the camp,
because people had died.*

*In each grave two to four
bodies were buried.*



1979 archive photo.

Joana Pereira

Quelicalai, Baucau District, 1978, 1981–1982

Joana Pereira is from Quelicalai, Baucau. In 1978, while living in the forest, her parents died of starvation. Sra Pereira was 13 years old. Together with her nine-year-old brother, Mateus, she surrendered to the Indonesian military, but her older brother continued to fight with the resistance in the forest. Sra Pereira told how families of resistance fighters were rounded up by the Indonesian military and administration and transported to Ataúro in 1981. She described how she and her young brother were held there for over a year. Without adequate shelter, food or medicines, she testified of a death-toll of two to five people per day until the International Red Cross brought some assistance in 1982.

In November 1982, Sra Joana and her young brother were released from Ataúro after her older brother had found them and intervened with the military. She eventually went to live with her older brother in Oecussi, and later she went to Dili to complete her education.



In 1978, when we were living in the forest, my father and mother died of hunger. After that, my younger brother Mateus and I surrendered to the Indonesian military in the village of Lakoliu, Quelicalai in Baucau. We stayed there with our older sisters and brothers. My other older brother Pascoal “Nixon” Freitas was still in the forest with the armed resistance, fighting the Indonesian military.

On 29 August 1981, the Quelicalai Koramil said to us: “Whoever still has family in the forest has to be punished.” And so the Koramil made a list of all of our names. They gave the list to the head of the village, A (name suppressed) who was part of the Indonesian Government administration. He was often used for spying on and for controlling people. All those on the list were to be imprisoned.

At first we did not know where we would be imprisoned. Then they posted the list on a plywood board in front of the village office. From that we learned that because Nixon was still in the forest we were going to be sent to Ataúro island. At that time I was 13 years old, and Mateus was only about nine years old.

The following day, the Quelicalai Koramil took us to the harbour of Laga, Baucau. We were guarded by four armed trucks. We stayed in Laga for one day. Then, at around seven o’clock in the morning of the following day the Indonesian military took us to Dili on warship number 502. Many families from other villages such as Seisal, Buibau, Quelicalai and Laga were on the same ship. We arrived in Dili around seven o’clock in the evening.

When we arrived in Dili the soldiers ordered us off the boat. They told us to take all our things which included clothes and food, such as yams, rice and maize, which we had brought in preparation to go to Ataúro. Then the soldiers ordered us to eat the food that had been provided by the military in buckets. Mateus took food for both of us. For two days on the journey towards Dili we had had nothing to eat.

At eight o'clock in the morning of 1 September 1981, we left for Ataúro on warship number 511. We arrived in Ataúro at 12 o'clock in the middle of the day. When we got off the ship we were welcomed by the Ataúro Koramil and the people who were already imprisoned there. The other prisoners helped us unload the things we had brought. The Ataúro Koramil ordered us to form a line and register our names one by one. When everyone had done this they took us by car to the prison. At the prison my brother and I were separated. He stayed in house number 22 with 60 people, and I stayed in house number 24 with 70 people.

The house we stayed in was completely bare. The roof was covered by corrugated iron, the walls were made of tarpaulin and there were no beds. We looked for *tali liar*, a kind of *areca* tree, the stems of which can be made into a mat to sleep on.

At first we were not given any food by the military. Mateus and I only ate the food which we had brought from Quelicai. After being there for one month, we received some food rations which consisted of three little cans of maize for each head of family, every two weeks.

Because the food rations were so small there was famine. Some of the prisoners took papaya fruit and sweet potatoes from the local citizens. There were also people who died from snakebite. The people who died were mostly children and the elderly and those from Los Palos and Viqueque. On average two to five people died each day.

In 1982 the International Red Cross brought assistance by helicopter. They distributed rice, mung beans, soybeans, dried fish, tea, sugar, salt, and canned fish, but no clothes. This assistance kept us alive and from that time on the deaths due to starvation decreased.

My older brother, Eduardo Freitas, visited us in October 1982. When he returned to Dili he asked the Kodim and the police to release us from Ataúro. They agreed. Soon after that my younger brother Mateus was taken to the Motael orphanage in Dili with other orphans. Later, in November 1982, the Ataúro Koramil also brought me back to Dili, on a rowboat.

*Because the
food rations were
so small there was
famine...*

*The people who
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Joana Pereira

*In 1982 the
International Red
Cross brought assistance
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*This assistance kept us
alive and from that time
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starvation decreased.*

I arrived at the harbour in Dili at seven o'clock at night. My brother Eduardo had returned to Oecussi so he did not pick me up. The soldiers took me to sleep at the Kodim office in Dili. I was very scared because I was a girl and all alone. The military then telephoned a member of the police by the name of Jeremias. He was a relative of mine. He took me to his house.

Later I went to stay with an uncle, Paolo, in Fomento, Comoro. During my stay in Dili I had to report to the police office behind what was the Governor's office during the Indonesian time. Later in November my brother Eduardo came to Dili and took me to Oecussi. I stayed in Oecussi for about three years but did not go to school. On 20 December 1985 I returned to Dili. In 1986 I started school and by 1994 I had completed my middle-school education. Now I live in Fatuhada with a family of my own.



*International emergency relief was only
allowed to enter Timor-Leste in late 1979.*

Rosalina da Costa

Manufahi District; Maubisse, Ainaro District; Ataúro, 1980s

Mrs Rosalina da Costa testified about her and her family's experience in Same and about being imprisoned on Ataúro in the early 1980s, when her husband and other men were in the mountains fighting the Indonesian military. She described how she was targeted by the military, and how Timorese civilians assisted the military in this, due to her husband being in the mountains. She told of months of continuous rape by the Indonesian military in Maubisse, before she and her children were imprisoned on the island of Ataúro "for four years, seven months and seven days."

In 1981, A (name suppressed) our *liurai* (king) and B (name suppressed) forced me to look for my husband, Eduardo da Silva. He was one of the Fretilin delegation in Rotuto, Kablaki. They gave a letter to me to drop in the forest or to place on a piece of wood in order for them to take and read it, and then come down to surrender. At that time my child was still very small. I do not know why they kept forcing me to go and find my husband in the forest until my feet were wounded. I asked them to simply kill me, but they would not.

A (name suppressed) and B (name suppressed) then gave information to the Indonesian military to take me and my sister-in-law who was from Turiscaí, to be held at the military headquarters. After that C (name suppressed), a military commander, raped me and a colleague of his raped my sister-in-law, even though she was pregnant at that time. They put me in together with two women from Hatu Udo, Builante (25 years old), because her husband Valente was still in the forest, and my sister-in-law, whose husband was also still in the forest.

My sister-in-law was punished by the military because her husband, Lorenço Lobato, was still in the forest. Because she was pregnant at an advanced stage her uncle, Beremau, came to take her to Maubisse. The military raped us for seven months even though I was already married and my sister-in-law was pregnant. Then the Indonesian military incarcerated me at Kodim 1634 in Manufahi, Same, for seven months. While we were held in Same we were no longer raped.

During Operation Kikis, or the "Fence of Legs" operation in Aitana, the Kodim commander told us not to wash our clothes as we would be moved to another place. The following day, my children Henrique (six years) and Nelson (four years) and I were moved to Ataúro. When we arrived there, we were assisted by the priest and the nuns. Everyday we went to look for *marunggai* and other leaves in the hills to eat. The Government gave us yellow maize in two food containers to eat so we could hold out for two weeks. However my children ate that corn crying. We did not bring extra clothing, and my child's shirt was carried away by the waves of the ocean. In the end, they were naked because there was no more clothing for them. Seeing that my children were naked, a mother gave her children's clothes for them.



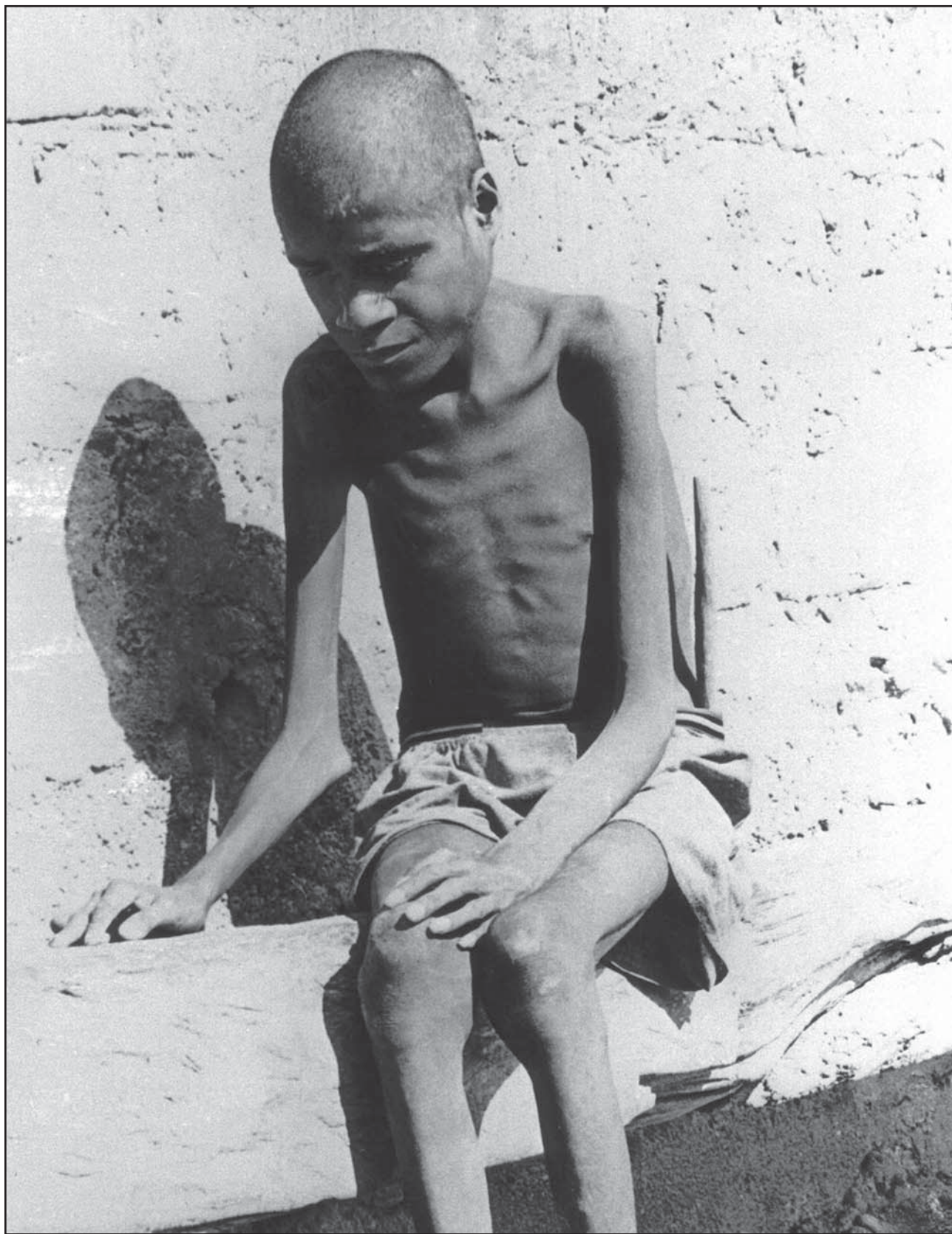
*The military raped
us for seven months
even though I was
already married and
my sister-in-law
was pregnant.*

We were imprisoned in Ataúro for four years, seven months and seven days. After that we returned to Same. After we returned from Ataúro, we did not have any food and did not know where our families were. We suffered a lot.

While I was still living on Ataúro, the Civil Force (Hansip) Commander C (name suppressed) forced my daughter Jacinta da Costa to marry his son. That daughter then died in Aidahaleu, Same. C (name suppressed) was not even a stranger. We are cousins. C (name suppressed) still lives in Same. He has gone crazy.



*Maubisse cemetery, Ainaro District.
Gravestones mark the demise of whole
families between 1976 and 1979.*



Young man in Laga, 1979, estimated to be age 20.

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Expert Testimonies

Gilman dos Santos

From the mid to late 1970s Gilman dos Santos worked as a civil servant with the local Government of Indonesia in Timor-Leste. He was involved in the distribution of aid to East Timorese internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the early years of the military conflict. In the 1980s he worked with the Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Mr dos Santos is currently the director of the NGO Ema Mata Dalan Ba Progresu Foundation (Etadep), providing emergency relief to famine victims.

Overview



Mr Santos gave testimony about his work with the Indonesian Government agency Pemda during the 1970s, providing assistance to Timorese who had come down from the mountains and were held in “concentration camps.” He testified as to how the situation of those in the mountains worsened from 1977, with Indonesian military activity preventing them growing food crops. He described the very poor condition of those surrendering, and the terrible conditions in the camps in which they were held. He said that in 1979 the Indonesian Government passed a law requiring all members of the civil service to be Indonesian citizens, and how this prompted him to resign. He told how the US non-governmental organisation CRS was eventually able to enter Timor-Leste in 1979 and to offer some relief. He worked for CRS from 1979 to the early 1980s, and testified to the challenges faced in this work. In particular he told how Timor-Leste was closed off due to Indonesian government policies, and how this severely restricted the ability of the international community to assist in the humanitarian crisis faced by the Timorese people.

The mass surrenders from the mountains in the late 1970s

Mr Santos testified that in the early months and years following the Indonesian military invasion, until about 1977, people who had fled to the mountains were mostly able to support themselves with food they grew. He said that the Indonesian military controlled the cities and the sub-district towns, but until 1977 they did not control many other areas. He said that as the military conducted more operations outside the towns and took control over greater areas, the people in the mountains were less able to stay settled and to grow crops. He said that this was the background to the mass surrenders that began to take place in late 1977, and that he observed at the time that the condition of those surrendering was very poor.

“According to my calculation, the food situation in the forest between 1975 and 1977 was not that bad. The people didn’t experience many problems because at that time they still had the ability to move around and were free to plant according to the seasons. They could produce food. TNI had only gained control over the cities in the districts and sub-districts, though there were attacks by the TNI into the forests.

“From 1978 to 1979, it seems like the food situation in the forest became worse and worse, as almost all areas were controlled by TNI, in the districts, sub-districts and even to the smallest and most remote villages. My assumption was proven to be right, because the people who surrendered were in a very deprived condition. They were very, very thin and starving.”

Indonesian “concentration camps”

Mr Santos said that those surrendering or captured by the Indonesian military were held in what he called “concentration camps:”

“The people that fled to the mountains came down in 1977, 1978 and 1979. Everyone who surrendered or who was captured by the Indonesian military were placed in concentration camps, which were not suitable for any human being. People were placed in large emergency tents, made from palm leaves or grass and they held everyone, without limiting numbers.

“Regarding the water situation, this was dependent on the district of the specific concentration camp. For instance in Liquiça or even in Metinaro it was very, very difficult to get water.”

Mr Santos said that he worked with the Indonesian local government agency Pemda from the end of 1977 until April 1979, distributing aid to Timorese held in the camps. He told of how assistance had to be given to the Indonesian military command for them to distribute to the people.

“We distributed assistance in the form of food supplies such as rice, noodles, and cooking oil to the districts, where there were refugees who had surrendered from the mountains. We distributed assistance from the International Red Cross and the Social Service Department of Pemda to Kodim [the District Military Command] and to Koramil [Sub-district Military Command], then to be channelled to the refugees or to people who were experiencing the famine. This assistance was very limited in amount and it was calculated that one family had the right to 5kg and sometimes less than that.

“The assistance given was only to get over the first few days in the places where they were held as refugees. After that everyone had to struggle for themselves or be assisted by family members who had come to visit or to pick them up.”

He said that the Indonesian military often kept supplies and sold them, rather than distribute them to starving communities.

“We were told by the people and often we saw for ourselves that this assistance was sold by Kodim or Koramil to stores that were there or to the local people who were able to buy them. Often it was only given to the families of Kodim or Koramil members.”

Mr Santos noted that there were camps in Liquiça, Metinaro, Maubisse, Remexio, Laga, Quelicai, Alas, and Zumalai. He described the condition of people held in the camps, and the lack of attention and support provided:

The food situation in the forest between 1975 and 1977 was not that bad.

The people didn't experience many problems because at that time they still had the ability to move around and were free to plant according to the seasons. They could produce food.

...this assistance was sold by Kodim or Koramil to stores that were there or to the local people who were able to buy them, and often it was only given to the families of Kodim or Koramil members.

“The conditions of the refugees were very worrying. They had nothing except for the clothing on their backs, most of which was torn and raggedy. There were some who only wore burlap sacks to cover their bodies. They were very thin, almost all of them were ill, with coughing, the flu, malaria, red-eye, stomach-ache, *beriberi*, diarrhoea and so on. The efforts of the Indonesian Red Cross to take charge of the situation by bringing in doctors were very minimal.”

Mr Santos said that the conditions in the camps in Liquiça and Metinaro were particularly bad, and that between “five to ten people died per day in these camps due to starvation or illness.”

Mr Santos testified of the difficulties faced in helping those suffering due to the lack of outside assistance. He reflected upon the humanitarian damage caused by the Indonesian Government policy to close Timor-Leste off to the outside world:

“Timor-Leste at that time was closed off to everyone. Even Indonesian journalists were not permitted to enter here. Regarding telecommunication, no permission was given for a long-distance network or an international connection. With these conditions no information could get out. With Timor-Leste being so closed off by the Indonesian Government, especially by ABRI, it was clear that the policy of Indonesia was to hinder assistance from other countries.”

He recalled the visit by international ambassadors to Timor-Leste in 1978, and noted that it was nearly a year later that it resulted in some international aid being allowed to enter. He lamented the delay of this aid.

Catholic Relief Services

Mr Santos told of his resignation from the Pemda agency in 1979, when there was a decision that all staff had to become Indonesian citizens. He said he joined the CRS team when it was established in September 1979, and that their office was open 18-20 hours a day, seven days a week, in the initial emergency response. He recalled that CRS owned just seven trucks, which he said was insufficient. He said CRS therefore hired two helicopters and other vehicles to try to meet the enormous need and to work in all districts:

“There were several stages to the distribution of assistance. The initial assistance was of cornmeal CSB [Corn Soy Blend], milk, clothes and soap. Then there was rice, maize, cornmeal and CSM [Corn Soy Milk] and medicines. CRS also hired medical staff in order to give assistance to sick people, and based them in various districts. After the food distribution was over, in order to work the farmland which had been left for five years without being worked or planted, CRS brought 430 water buffalos to be distributed in the fertile areas. This assistance was given to the western areas and to the central region, where many of the animals had been killed.”

Mr Santos told of the difficulties often faced by CRS staff working in a militarised society:

“Often in distributing aid the staff experienced obstacles from the military and police. They made up all sorts of reasons, because the local security forces were not in agreement with the local government [district administrator and sub-district head], who supported the CRS and ICRC programme of assistance. In order to overcome this problem, we said that this assistance came from America, and showed the American flag which was printed on the packages of food. We said that the food assistance was humanitarian aid from the government and people of America for the people suffering from starvation and it was not to be sold.”

He said that while the military and police often created obstacles for CRS, there were some areas where the security forces worked to support the CRS emergency aid programme.

“The security forces and the local governments that assisted the flow of the CRS assistance were Lacló, together with Mr Inácio Fernandes (deceased), who at the time was working as a sub-district head; in Alas together with Sub-district head Mr Octávio Morato; in Fatuberliu with Sub-district head Mr Tito Lopes; as well as with the Koramil in Vermasse, the Koramil in Alas and the Koramil in Turiscail.”

Closing remarks: extending the policy of displacement

Mr Santos concluded his testimony by emphasising the suffering caused in Timor-Leste due to the Indonesian Government policy of isolating it from international assistance. He added that in 1979,

“ABRI and the local government implemented a programme of concentration camps and placed the people in strategic places close to roads in order to be able to control those coming down from the mountains more easily, specifically, but also to control the entire population in general. It was also to isolate the independence fighters who were still in the forests.”

Telling of how this policy of displacement was used to especially target families of independence fighters in the mountains, he said:

“In 1980, ABRI and the local government again forcibly displaced people who they suspected had relatives who were freedom fighters in the forests, to the island of Ataúro.”

Mr Santos closed reflecting on his hope that his testimony could help the CAVR uncover the truth of this terrible period of suffering by the Timorese people.

*Timor-Leste at
that time was closed
off to everyone... with
these conditions no
information could
get out.*

*...it was clear that
the policy of Indonesia
was to hinder assistance
from other countries.*

Pat Walsh, Former Human Rights Director, Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA)

Pat Walsh has been involved with Timor-Leste in many capacities since 1975. In 1979 he prepared a report on the Timor-Leste famine of 1978-79 for Action for World Development, an Australian church-based non-government organisations, based on information received from church sources in Indonesia and Timor-Leste, refugees and other sources. Following the report, he co-ordinated an Australian funding appeal for victims of the famine. He attended a US Congressional hearing on the crisis and undertook further research and lobbying on the issue in the United States and Europe, including the Vatican. His research on the issue was widely quoted. He successfully lobbied for an Australian Senate inquiry into social conditions in Timor-Leste and testified on the famine at Senate hearings in 1983. During this period he began working for the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA), the peak body for approximately 100 Australian development NGOs. He founded and was the Director of its regional human rights programme from 1985-1999. He also worked across the Asian region, especially supporting the growth of local civil society human rights initiatives and organisations. He is currently a senior member of the UNMISSET Human Rights Unit and is seconded to CAVR as Special Advisor.

Overview



Mr Walsh provided a submission to the CAVR analysing the political, military and humanitarian context and consequences of what he called “great famine of 1978-1980” of Timor-Leste. He described the preparation of and responses to the 1979 report, which he said concluded that “Timor-Leste was in the grip of a humanitarian crisis of devastating proportions.”

Mr Walsh stated that he saw the purpose of his testimony as twofold: to supplement the victims’ testimony by sharing what concerned organisations outside Timor-Leste knew and did about the famine and to present some issues which CAVR might address in its broader inquiry.

He dedicated his testimony to all who died from hunger in Timor-Leste, and specifically to the “nameless girl from Laga,” the picture of whose wasted frame was publicised worldwide in October 1979.

The political and military context of the famine

Mr Walsh began by putting the famine in its political and military context:

“At the time Indonesia’s campaign to incorporate Timor-Leste was in trouble, both in Timor-Leste and internationally. Due in no small measure to the brutality and violence of Indonesia’s military intervention, large numbers of people had fled to the mountains...despite superior numbers and equipment, Indonesia had failed to crush Fretilin militarily. This failure to secure rapid, outright conquest and to win the hearts and minds of the East Timorese was compounded by diplomatic setbacks internationally, with the issue attracting ongoing attention in the UN, US Congress and other international fora. This was deeply embarrassing both for Jakarta and for Indonesia’s main allies who had always stressed the importance of a rapid takeover with minimum public fuss...”

In this context, he said, Indonesia launched fresh military offensives. In September 1977, the first offensive was a “search and destroy” ground and bombing campaign targeting

Fretilin food supplies, resourced by 15,000 additional troops and supported by US-provided warplanes. In May 1978, the military offensive “Operation Skylight” (Operasi Mercusuar) aimed to surround and force the surrender of large numbers of civilians, cutting off Fretilin’s lifeblood. He said that this targeted large numbers of civilians who had not surrendered during the first campaign, who had fled to the Matebian mountain area. He noted:

“From a military point of view the offensive was extremely successful, resulting in the virtual, though temporary, annihilation of the resistance. From a humanitarian point, it was a disaster.”

Reporting on the situation in 1979: accessing and analysing information

Mr Walsh reflected that “compiling a report on famine in this highly charged context was not easy.” He spoke about the difficulties in accessing accurate and reliable information at a time when the Indonesian military were allowing no foreign personnel to enter Timor-Leste. He said that presenting the findings within Australia was also problematic, as the issue of Timor-Leste was already highly political and divisive, and that “one’s view, whatever it was, was sure to be attacked by the other side.” He noted the commitment shown to Timor-Leste by Australian aid agencies in commissioning this report. The report was adopted by ACFOA in July 1979, representing over 100 Australian aid agencies. It concluded that the main elements of the crisis confronting Timor-Leste were:

- *A mounting death toll due to continuing war, malnutrition and disease.*
- *Massive displacement of people from the interior into problem-ridden, Indonesian controlled camps.*
- *The lack of capacity of the Indonesian Red Cross, the only permissible channel for overseas aid apart from the Catholic Church’s small programme.*
- *The misappropriation of aid.*

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[The ACFOA Report] estimated that about 300,000 people had come down from the mountains by the end of 1978, most of whom were in very bad condition.

Basing its findings on reports from the Church, diplomatic and aid sources, he said that the report estimated that about 300,000 people had come down from the mountains by the end of 1978, most of whom were in very bad condition. The report, he said, stated the need for a massive and urgent relief operation to avert further tragedy. He noted that a representative of World Vision Indonesia had reported on the situation, as had the Indonesian Red Cross (IRC), and that in September 1978 11 foreign Ambassadors and some journalists visited Timor-Leste, escorted by the Indonesian Foreign Minister Dr Mochtar Kusumaatmaja. They represented the Governments of Canada, USA, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, India, South Korea, Bangladesh, Egypt, Syria and Iraq, and were told that some 125,000 people had come down from the mountains with 20-30,000 of these in appalling, desperate condition. He noted that four Ambassadors (from Australia, Canada, Japan and USA) called for the urgent implementation of an international relief operation.

Troubling issues

Mr Walsh spoke of a range of what he called “troubling issues” identified in the report. ACFOA, he said, posed several critical questions about the victims, the causes, the responses and the effects of the ongoing humanitarian disaster. In many cases definite answers were not available at the time, but he said that ACFOA started to draw some tentative conclusions. These included that people were coming down from the mountains driven by the imperative of sheer physical survival, and that “war was clearly the catalyst.” He said that some went further, referring to a report by James Dunn dated 26 September 1979, in which he stated his belief that the crisis was the result of a “deliberate strategy to starve Fretilin and its supporters into surrender.”

Mr Walsh said that these Indonesian military advances forced the resistance to re-think strategies and “to let people under their control go.” He noted that research at the time revealed that the Indonesian military had embarked on a systematic campaign to resettle the population in centres under Indonesian control. These, he said, were variously referred to as “relief centres,” “concentration camps,” and “strategic hamlets,” and that they resembled counter-insurgency techniques employed against guerillas in such places as Rhodesia, Malaysia and Vietnam. He said that ACFOA reported that life in these centres was difficult and restricted. Mr Walsh said that Indonesian defence statistics obtained by ACFOA at the time stated that over 300,000 East Timorese were living in these controlled camps by December 1978.

Embargo on foreign aid and international humanitarian law

Mr Walsh noted that for the first three years of its occupation of Timor-Leste, Indonesia denied foreign aid agencies and personnel access, making the Indonesian Red Cross (IRC) the sole official channel of aid. He contrasted this to the situation of 1999, and noted:

“It must now be asked: what motivated Indonesia to be so restrictive, what were the humanitarian consequences of this policy, bearing in mind the humanitarian impact of the invasion and subsequent military offensives, and did these restrictions amount to a violation of international law?”

He said that “Australian agencies believed that the embargo on foreign aid was part of a wider embargo on access by independent media and human rights bodies designed to keep the Timor-Leste question out of the public eye.”

Mr Walsh spoke of the obligations, particularly those of Indonesia, under international humanitarian law in this context:

“International humanitarian law recognises that those affected by calamity or armed conflict are entitled to protection and assistance. It defines legal obligations on states and warring parties to provide such assistance or to allow it to be provided, as well as to prevent and to refrain from behaviour that violates fundamental human rights...What did seem clear to us, however, was that Indonesia’s efforts at humanitarian relief were a much lower priority than its military operations and that independent agencies would not be permitted until Indonesia had achieved its military objectives.”

Responses to the report

Mr Walsh described the response to the report as “reflecting divisions within Australia over the Timor-Leste question.” The initial response by 14 Australian aid agencies was to call the International Disaster Emergencies Committee (IDEC) to launch a public funding appeal for Timor-Leste. However, he told of how the Australian Red Cross, reflecting the Australian Government’s stance, used its veto as a member of IDEC to prevent the launching of the appeal. Instead, the ICRC launched their own appeal, using advertising that made no references to the causes of the disaster or of Indonesia’s role in it.

Some months later, in 1980, Mr Walsh recalled that while travelling in the United States on behalf of ACFOA, he attended a US Congressional Hearing on aid to Timor-Leste, followed by a meeting with CRS who had not been at the hearing. He said that during that time CRS was sponsoring a television commercial featuring the Pope who presented the humanitarian disaster as being caused by drought. Mr Walsh told of his subsequent visit to the Vatican in Rome, and ICRC and Church agencies in Jakarta. He said that “a key theme of this advocacy was that military operations were responsible for the displacement of people and their abysmal condition (and that) Timor-Leste...could not be reduced to an aid problem but was in essence an issue of international justice.”

On the complex response of the Catholic Church, Mr Walsh noted:

“There was something of a division of opinion in the Catholic Church on Timor-Leste. Many people in Timor-Leste turned to the Church and Dom Martinho Lopes and later Dom Carlos bravely spoke out for the people. But my visits to New York and the Vatican in 1980, and fairly frequent visits to Vatican representatives in Jakarta, made it clear that the concerns of local church leaders...were subservient to what is known in nation states as the national interest. That is to say that the Church was preoccupied with its relations with Islam in general, and Indonesia in particular.”

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*Death rates were high...
many persons in their
prime years were dying.*

*There were large
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in a marasmic state, a
condition which had
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East Timorese advocacy

Mr Walsh told of the efforts of East Timorese to raise the issue of the famine and its wider political context. He spoke of the work of Fr Francisco Fernandes and Fr Apolinario Guterres when they addressed the UN Decolonisation Committee in New York on behalf of the East Timorese refugee community in Portugal. Paulo Pires made a presentation to this UN Committee on behalf of UDT. He said that this supplemented the work done by José Ramos-Horta and his colleagues, and that as a result UN General Assembly resolutions at this time began to make reference to the famine and to the humanitarian needs of the East Timorese people.

Admission of CRS and ICRC

Mr Walsh told how in late 1979 Indonesia moderated its “hard-line and costly policy,” allowing Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to begin work in Timor-Leste, which he said they did with vigour and efficiency in very challenging circumstances. He said that over the next 18 months ICRC, with the IRC, assisted 80,000 displaced people in 15 villages and saved many lives. He said that the ICRC served the displaced people in Ataúro until 1986, and their reports stated clearly that the displacements were a result of military activity.

Mr Walsh said that during this period, CRS spent US\$4 million distributing 17,000 tons of food as well as medicine, clothing, soap, seeds, agricultural equipment and water buffalo. He reflected that CRS then committed to Timor-Leste for the long term.

Mr Walsh noted that the task facing these agencies was captured painfully in the report of the CRS May 1979 survey visit to Timor-Leste, compiled by its Programme Director Mr Frank Carlin, a veteran of 14 years of relief work in Asia. Mr Walsh quoted from the report:

“The situation observed by Mr Carlin...was, in many locations, one of intense human suffering due to illness, hunger and starvation. Death rates were high. Those critically ill were not limited to the very young and the very old—normally the first to succumb to sickness and starvation. Many persons in their prime years were dying. There were large numbers of teenage youths and young adults in a marasmic state, a condition which had reduced them to little more than walking skeletons...in those locations where large numbers of people had recently come down from the mountains conditions were as critical as anything Mr Carlin had ever encountered...”

Acknowledging that these agencies' efforts saved many lives, Mr Walsh commented:

"The famine was a complex emergency of the first order involving not only precious human lives but significant power interests. The dilemma for agencies concerned was how to meet their humanitarian relief obligations without at the same time also aiding Indonesia's military objectives in Timor-Leste..."

Mr Walsh pointed out that in 1994 disaster relief agencies acknowledged the need for a professional code of conduct to regulate relief delivery in complex emergencies such as that of Timor-Leste in the 1970s. He said that CRS and the ICRC helped formulate this code, whose ten principles include commitments that aid will not be used to further a particular political standpoint, that agencies will respect culture and custom and that they will not act as instruments of government policy.

*The famine was
a complex emergency
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Concluding remarks and recommendations

Mr Walsh concluded his testimony with four recommendations for consideration to the CAVR, focused on furthering the healing process of the community and seeking to help the Timorese and the international community learn from these experiences:

1. *That CAVR support the recommendations to the governments of disaster-affected countries and to intergovernmental organisations contained in Annex I and Annex II of the Red Cross Code of Conduct.*
2. *That CAVR ask the governments and agencies referred to above to assist CAVR in its continuing inquiry into the famine, its causes, consequences and related questions.*
3. *That a permanent, but educative, memorial be established about this time.*
4. *That East Timorese be encouraged and assisted to record and write about these experiences, including the practical survival skills that were used, both to assist with healing and to provide an historical record for the future.*

He reflected on the task of the CAVR in its final report:

"In formulating its final report, the CAVR will be talking to Indonesia, and of course we are all very conscious of the conflict going on in Aceh. What happened in Timor-Leste in the 1970s and 1980s should not happen in Aceh in 2003. If Indonesia followed the [Red Cross] code of ethics, then this would help."

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Food aid is distributed in Hatolia during the famine of the late-1970s.

Excerpts from an interview in Portugal, 1980

Father Leoneto do Rego

Father Leoneto do Rego came from Angra do Heroismo in Portugal to serve as a missionary in the Diocese of Dili in 1956. He was 41 years old at this time. He stayed in Timor-Leste for 23 years, including three years in an area controlled by Fretilin during the early years of the Indonesian occupation. He had been the Head of Mission and Principal of the well-known Soibada School. Although Fr Leoneto did not testify at the public hearing, a transcript of an interview he gave in 1980 to Costa Alves and Moreira Reis, and which was published in Funu magazine in July 1980, was distributed. The following are a summary and excerpts from this interview.



Overview

Fr Leoneto do Rego told of his experiences living in the east of the island, in the mountain areas of Soibada, Lacluta, and Barique in Manatuto District, in the period after the full-scale Indonesian invasion of December 1975. He also described his experiences in an Indonesian military prison in Baucau after he surrendered to the Indonesians due to ill health in December 1978. And he recounted his time in Dili after this period, before he returned to his homeland, Portugal.

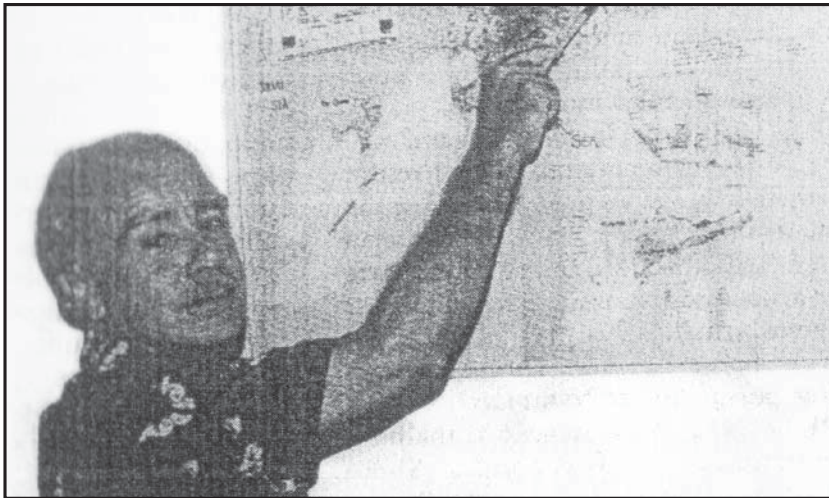
Indonesian military invasion

Fr Leoneto told how at the time of the invasion he had contemplated fleeing Timor-Leste, as he felt his age and health would be a liability. He said he discussed this with Nicolao Lobato. However, Fr Leoneto said that he reconsidered his decision as he felt it could cause problems to Fretilin if he surrendered to the Indonesian military, and so he decided to stay.

After the Indonesian military invasion, Fr Leoneto told of how he moved to Lacluta and stayed there for a year and a half. He said that during this period, in that area, there was very little indication that a war was going on. The people were free to work the land. He said each family had their own field which they worked individually and communal land was worked by all to feed the Fretilin armed forces. He said that people chose freely to work this land and to support the Fretilin soldiers with food.

Fr Leoneto described the initiatives of people in the mountain encampments in order to survive. He said they organised a network of small hospitals, led by nurses and health workers. He said that "Fretilin was very good at encouraging people who were skilled to assist other people." He told how young people who had worked in a laboratory in Dili established a small manual laboratory to produce medicines. He said that they made effective medicines for treating malaria and other fevers, diarrhoea, and for lessening the effects of tuberculosis. He said that malaria medicines were made from two types of trees, the *quina* and the *ai-hanec*. To deal with infections, he said, alcohol was made from the sap of the *sago* tree. He said that there was "an ancient tradition about the knowledge of trees."

However, Fr Leoneto said that these small hospitals were not able to cope with the terrible war wounds, as there were no surgeons and the number of cases were overwhelming.



Here, Fr Leoneto do Rego shows where he spent three years in Fretelin bases after the 1975 Indonesian invasion. (Taken from Funu magazine, No. 1, July 1980.)

Indonesian military encirclement campaign

Fr Leoneto said that they started facing difficulties in 1978, as Indonesian military advances and the encirclement campaign forced people to move from place to place. Fr Leoneto told how he fled warplanes and bombings while in failing health, and of how he narrowly escaped being blown apart by a bomb:

“There was a big operation of encirclement, which targeted my area using Indonesian soldiers who arrived on the southern coast, and there were suddenly a lot of movements of soldiers in the north and east. The Fretelin encampment began to weaken, and this is when the large exodus of people happened who left their encampments, gardens and plants...My encampment, Naroman (Brightness) did not escape this situation. I could sense the closeness of the direct fighting.”

With reference to the military organisation and operation, Fr Leoneto testified that the Indonesian military was very weak and scared of Fretelin. Indonesia's strength lay in its weapons. On the other hand, he noted Fretelin were ready to die for their struggle but lacked good weapons. Often, he noted, they used spears and arrows. He said that many Indonesian soldiers died in combat, estimating that for each Fretelin soldier who died, two or three Indonesian military were killed.

Surrender

Fr Leoneto told how in failing health he had sought permission from the Fretelin leader Nicolau Lobato to surrender to the Indonesians and to seek to return to Portugal. He said that he received an oral message relayed to him with Lobato's approval.

“He said that it was my unconditional right to leave. He accepted it as a good decision and wished me well.”

Fr Leoneto surrendered on 31 December 1978. He told of how he learned at the Indonesian headquarters that Nicolau Lobato had been killed that day:

“Everyone looked sad. It was only natural. Not only because he was an educated man, who represented what they represented. But also because of his open-mindedness. He was very accessible and very wise. We had been close friends...”

There was a big operation of encirclement, which targeted my area using Indonesian soldiers who arrived on the southern coast, and there were suddenly a lot of movements of soldiers in the north and east... and this is when the large exodus of people happened.

Father Leoneto do Rego

“Fretilin was very good at encouraging people who were skilled to assist other people”...

To deal with infections, he said, alcohol was made from the sap of the sago tree.

He said that there was “an ancient tradition about the knowledge of trees.”

Fr Leoneto said he was taken by helicopter to a Baucau prison, where “for 17 days I was interrogated twice a day.” He recalled that he was not hit but that he could hear the screams of other prisoners being tortured. He was then taken to Dili.

Life in Dili

He spoke of the tensions of life in Dili at this time. He said that the Indonesians were implementing their new systems, and that “in the offices everyone was using translators and in schools only Indonesian was taught, which nobody understood.” He said the Indonesian national scouts’ activities were imposed on children. He told of problems when Indonesian construction workers were brought into Timor.

He also spoke of the rape of young women by the Indonesian military and of the torture centre at the Sang Tai Hoo shop in Dili, which was converted into the Indonesian military intelligence headquarters. He said there was an expression that was used in Dili at this time, regarding “a friend’s car.” He said that people would jokingly say, “watch out, a friend’s car is coming to pick you up.” In truth, he said that “a friend’s car” was a sinister institution that would in the late hours of the night often stop at people’s houses to pick them up.”

Fr Leoneto said he observed that members of the UDT and Apodeti parties felt fooled by the Indonesians at this time. He cited in particular what he regarded as the greed of the Indonesians in Dili, demonstrated by the military control over all coffee distribution.

Concluding remarks

As the interview was given in 1980, news was filtering out of Timor at the time of new guerilla tactics being used by Fretilin. Fr Leoneto concluded that this did not surprise him and predicted that they would be quite successful at this campaign.

In Closing

Closing Address, 29 July 2003

Dr José Ramos-Horta, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation, RDTL

José Ramos-Horta was born in December 1949. After studying at the Liceu in Dili he worked as a journalist on the newspaper A Voz de Timor and was a founding member of a clandestine colonial group in 1970. He was exiled to Mozambique later that year for criticism of the Portuguese regime. He resumed his job as a journalist in Timor in 1972 and played a leading role in the establishment of the political parties ASDT and, later, Fretilin. He travelled to Australia and Indonesia to build support for independence. After the proclamation of independence on 28 November 1975 he was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Information and was sent out of Timor early in December to internationalise the independence issue, particularly at the United Nations. Along with Bishop Belo, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996. He became the RDTL Minister for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation in 2002. He is the author of Funu: The Unfinished Saga of East Timor.

Introduction



Before I close this public hearing I want to begin with an apology. I have not been able to closely follow the work of the CAVR. This is because of my portfolio as Minister for Foreign Affairs which makes it necessary for me to spend a lot of time overseas. As a small country we must constantly go and knock on people's doors. People do not come from other countries to knock on ours. Colin Powell does not come to Dili, knock on my door and ask me to welcome him. It is I who must go to Washington, London, Lisbon, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Canberra and all the other places knocking on their doors and asking the leaders of these countries if they will meet with me. I have been doing this for 24 years. I thought it was over but, in fact, I must keep doing it because there are many problems in the world. If we do not keep appearing in other countries, they will forget us.

For this reason I did not have the opportunity to come yesterday and today to listen to the words of our sisters and brothers, the survivors who suffered for 24 years, either physically or through what they witnessed. I offer my felicitations and my sincere congratulations to the CAVR and to the Commissioners for the work they are doing with integrity, justice, and objectivity. They listen and record what they hear as it is told, free of political manipulation. I also offer my sincere congratulations to Mr Pat Walsh and Mr Patrick Burgess. When I heard previously that they were to be Advisors to the CAVR I was very happy. Because these two are people of strength, integrity, and professional dedication. They are giving their bodies and souls for Timor. And so the CAVR is very fortunate indeed to have the collaboration of these two men.

Working overseas during the occupation

Thank you very much to the international community, the United Nations and the countries that are providing support to the CAVR's work. I did not have any direct experience of the situation here, because together with Dr Mari Alkatiri and Rogerio Lobato, I left Timor on 4 December 1975. A plane came from Australia and took us to Darwin and Sydney. Then each of us followed the mission given to us by the Vice President (Prime Minister) Nicolao Lobato. I was to go to New York to visit the United Nations. Dr Alkatiri went to Mozambique to seek support from the Non-Aligned Movement and the third world. And Rogerio Lobato went off to act on the portfolio given to him. And so, we do not have experience with what happened here in Timor.

The information that we received overseas came through Fretilin from the points of resistance. Between 1975 and 1979 there was not a single letter or a piece of information from inside Timor. We sought information from wherever we could, especially from the Church. But even communication with the Church was not direct. Mr Pat Walsh was the link. It was only after 1983 when Dom Martinho Lopes came out because God opened the way for him to go overseas, that better information started to reach us. In 1981 the clandestine resistance in Dili was not yet well-organised. Only once the clandestine resistance in Dili got well-organised did information start to come out of the country.

When we started our work for the resistance on the diplomatic front it was the time of the Cold War. The Soviet Union had not yet fallen, and so our battle and the suffering of our people were forgotten by many. When you do not have any photos, or more particularly film footage to show people as proof, a lot of people do not believe you. Our enemies called me a liar. If it was not for the courage of the journalist Max Stahl, who filmed the Santa Cruz massacre, or if there were no photographs or images to support what I said about Santa Cruz, people would have just said: "He's a liar". Fortunately God put Max Stahl in Santa Cruz where he could witness with his own eyes, and record on video, proof which people could not deny. This was the beginning of a change in the world's consciousness and increased the power of our diplomatic work. But I am not here to talk about the history of diplomacy.

Reconciliation, justice and truth

Because I cannot talk about the years after 1975 here, I would like to reflect a little on the question of reconciliation, justice and truth.

There is not a single Timorese person who did not lose some family during the occupation. Some families were completely wiped out. There used to be 14 people in the Lobato family. Now Rogerio is the only one alive. From Nicolau Lobato to his younger siblings—they are all dead. There are many families like this throughout Timor.

When we started our work for the resistance on the diplomatic front it was the time of the Cold War.

The Soviet Union had not yet fallen and so our battle, and the suffering of our people were forgotten by many.

Last September my family and I went to Lolotoe. What did we go there to do? To exhume the remains of my younger sister Maria Gina. She died on 18 December 1978. Fortunately her death was witnessed by the people and they buried her. After 24 years, we managed to find her bones and bring them to Dili for burial.

But to this day we have not been able to find where our other two siblings, Nuno and Guilherme, were killed or where they were buried. This is an experience that many Timorese people have had throughout Timor. I do not have direct experience because I was not here, but through my family and friends I know well what happened here over the 24 years.

When we contemplate what happened to the people in the past we also want to think about justice. Will justice really be done? Will those who did evil, who killed, who carried weapons in order to take people's lives, be punished? Our position, the position of the President, the Government and my personal position is this: firstly, the Government is giving strong support to this process by means of the CAVR, because before we think about justice we must think about truth. Truth is also an act of justice. At least the people of the world can hear what happened over those 24 years.

The Government also respects the integrity and the independence of the Serious Crimes Unit that UNTAET established in Timor and which is now working in Dili and all the districts. The Government gives its support and respects the power of the members of the Serious Crimes Unit. In 1999, the Government of Indonesia created an ad-hoc tribunal in Jakarta which promised to do justice. The Indonesian Government did not want an international tribunal and that is why it offered to run an ad-hoc tribunal itself. We know that to this day justice has not been done because that tribunal has not yet provided true justice. The Serious Crimes Unit handed over many cases of ex-militia who received sentences of ten, 20 or 30 years. But, for those who were most responsible in Indonesia, the ad-hoc tribunal has not provided justice.

The dilemma for Timor is this. If there were no ad-hoc tribunal the people of Timor could hope for, could insist on, an international tribunal. An international tribunal such as the one in Rwanda, and in the former Yugoslavia, created by the UN Security Council. In the Security Council, 15 countries are represented. Ten countries do not have veto power, they do not have a lot of power. Five countries are the really powerful ones. They are the ones who say whether or not a tribunal can be created. In order to create a tribunal there must be at least nine votes and none of the five permanent members can vote against it. A single negative vote from one of the five permanent members means that the resolution does not pass, the resolution is dropped. We do not know whether or not these ten countries have the strength to create a tribunal. And we do not know whether those 15 countries will vote in favour or against.

And even if the Security Council chooses to have an international tribunal, it does not mean the Government of Timor will manage to find the money for the work of that tribunal. I will give a small example. The international community has not yet given all

the money that the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation requires in order to do its work. Only some countries have helped financially and the budget of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation is small. The budget for an international tribunal would be much bigger.

The international community has not yet given all the money to the United Nations for the recruitment of 200 people to work for the Timorese Government. According to the plan of UNMISSET there are 300 positions that the Security Council pays for directly from the money of the Security Council. For the other 200 positions, it is not the Security Council that pays, but individual donor countries give money for their recruitment. Up to this time a majority of those 200 positions lack funding. If the international community lacks the money, lacks the power to support the CAVR, lacks the power to contribute to the 200 positions, then we must think realistically about whether they can give money towards an international tribunal. I do not think so. As well, Indonesia has said that it will not collaborate.

So what is the Government's strategy with regard to lobbying for an international tribunal? We must make a good analysis of the relationship with Indonesia. We must also understand the difficulties facing Indonesia. The Indonesia of today is a new Indonesia. It is not the Indonesia of Soeharto's time. They are in transition from a dictatorship and that democracy is not like a strong democracy with deep roots. It is a shaky democracy because there are many problems. And because of this, our diplomatic relationship with Indonesia is also new.

The relationship with Indonesia and the national interest

President Megawati has shown her strength to open diplomatic relations with us. She came to the celebration of our independence. Our President visited her in Jakarta. Our Prime Minister went there a few months ago to improve the relationship, to move out of the past and to look toward the future. Because of this we actually have a diplomatic relationship with Indonesia. If we persist in creating an international tribunal we could destroy this relationship, and this will also create more suffering for President Megawati.

So when the Government makes a decision it must reflect carefully on what it can do to best serve the national interest. Justice serves the national interest, but we know that sometimes we have to sacrifice some of our emotions because there is something bigger to which we need to cling. The greater thing is liberty, independence, peace and stability in Timor-Leste.

I will give an example from South Africa. For more than 40 years, South Africa was under the system of Apartheid. According to the UN General Assembly's definition, Apartheid is a crime against humanity. But in South Africa they did not have an international tribunal. They created a Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation like ours. They did not call it the Commission for Reception, just Truth and Reconciliation.

Strictly speaking, according to the definition of the General Assembly of Apartheid as a crime against humanity, this means they should have had an international tribunal to judge everyone who took part in the system of Apartheid. But they did not. To achieve the national interest, peace, and stability, they made a Commission to hear the truth. Some were judged, but within South Africa.

Here in Timor, we have created not one Commission but two institutions: the CAVR and the ad-hoc tribunal. This is more than was done in South Africa, and some of the militia have already been brought to trial. This is the situation. I am just being frank with everyone, with the entire society, when I say that I, as Minister for Foreign Affairs engaged in Timor's diplomatic work, do not believe that it is in Timor's best strategic interest to lobby for an international tribunal.

Liberty and conscience

Obviously as Foreign Minister I do not give the orders. Most important is what the President has to say. Next the Council of Ministers and after that also the Parliament. But my opinion as Foreign Minister is, as I just said, that Timor's interests will not be best defended by means of an international tribunal. Throughout 24 years we asked the world for justice. When we asked the world for justice, according to my understanding we were asking for liberty for Timor. In my opinion there is no greater justice than liberty. Timor has achieved liberty and independence. This is justice.

If Indonesia does not manage to create justice, if Indonesia lacks the strength to create justice, if the international community lacks the power to create justice, they must search their own souls, look into the mirror, and ask themselves whether their conscience is clear or not. Because we do not have a problem. Our conscience is clear because we are the victims and we found justice through liberty. If those who killed, those who committed crimes, do not have the courage or the strength to acknowledge and accept responsibility for what they have done, then they will live with this for the many years that God always gives. They will live with their responsibility, not Timor.

Timor is free already. Free to build a new nation, to look to the future. This is my understanding of the concept of justice. There is no greater justice than Timor's independence and freedom. I know that people cannot give back my three siblings that died. I cannot bring them back. This is the kind of high price that all of Timor has paid.

For 24 years the world did not hear us. I speak from direct personal experience. And the people of Timor also speak from direct personal experience. But in the end, the world heard. People all over the world, not just governments, but worldwide civil society heard, and Governments heard and the Security Council heard. Finally, after 24 years, they also carried out justice. They stood and accepted their responsibility to help us achieve independence.

And so despite the mistakes that some of them made by contributing to the invasion, by ignoring the issue, by closing their eyes, in 1999 their consciences were awakened and they arose to help Timor achieve liberty. That is an act of justice.

If we can acknowledge and be grateful to the big countries that in the past forgot us but now are helping us, we should also find the strength to look for reconciliation with Indonesia. Because Indonesia is not just the military. It is not just the soldiers. Indonesia is not just *Kopassus* or *Polri*. Indonesia is a big nation with many people who have suffered and many people who have helped us.

There are many more people in Indonesia who have suffered and who are good than the small number of people that are bad. And so we have good-will, we have good relations with the people. Those that are bad will continue to live in Indonesia, amongst them. Indonesia will have to watch each day in order to strengthen their democracy, justice and liberty.

Concluding remarks

That is all I have to say. As I said, I do not speak as a survivor and I cannot speak of that experience. I have just shared my thoughts frankly and honestly, not with some political motivation. I have just spoken of what we can do and what, I believe, we cannot do. This process is not over yet as the Security Council and the Secretary General are still doing another evaluation. Within a few weeks, two or three months, the Secretary-General will hand over a report to the Security Council. A report about the work of the Serious Crimes Unit and a report about the ad-hoc tribunal. They are still doing an evaluation of these two systems, these two mechanisms, whether or not they are producing results and whether or not there are other options.

So the final word, the final decision will come from the Security Council. I think that within two or three months we will hear the options for achieving justice from the Security Council.

This is all I have to say. Thank you.



1979 Laga, archive photo.

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Glossary

ABRI	<i>Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia</i>	<i>Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia (called TNI after restructure 1 April 1999)</i>
ACFOA	<i>Australian Council for Overseas Aid</i>	
Aditla	<i>Associação Democrática para a Integração de Timor-Leste na Austrália</i>	<i>Democratic Association for the Integration of Timor-Leste to Australia</i>
Apodeti	<i>Asociação Popular Democrática Timorese</i>	<i>Timorese Popular Democratic Association</i>
ASDT	<i>Associação Social Democrática Timorese</i>	<i>Non-commissioned Village Police Officer</i>
CNRT	<i>Concelio Nasional Resistência de Timor Leste</i>	<i>National Council of the Resistance in Timor-Leste</i>
CRS	<i>Catholic Relief Services</i>	
Estafeta		<i>Clandestine courier for the Resistance</i>
Falintil	<i>Forças Armada de Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste</i>	<i>Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor</i>
Fretilin	<i>Frente Revolucionária de Timor Leste Independente</i>	<i>Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor</i>
Haksolok	<i>Naran Resistência Fretilin nian ba Regiaun Fronteira Timor-Leste</i>	<i>Fretilin's term for the Western (Border) Region of Timor-Leste during the Resistance</i>
Hansip	<i>Pertahanan Sipil</i>	<i>Civil Defence (Force)</i>
ICRC	<i>International Committee of the Red Cross</i>	
IRC	<i>Indonesian Red Cross</i>	<i>Japan International Co-operation Agency</i>
Interfet	<i>International Force for East Timor</i>	<i>The force arrived 20 September 1999</i>
Jakarta II		<i>Cliffs of Hatabuilico, Ainaro District, where the Indonesian military thrwe countless people to their deaths throughout the years of conflict.</i>
Kasi I	<i>Kepala Seksi Inteligen</i>	<i>Head of Intelligence Section</i>
Kodim	<i>Komando Distrik Militer</i>	<i>District Military Command</i>
Kopassus	<i>Komando Pasukan Khusus</i>	<i>Special Forces Command (1986-present)</i>
Koramil	<i>Komando Rayon Militer</i>	<i>Sub-district Military Command</i>
KOTA	<i>Klibur Oan Timor Aswain</i>	<i>Unified Brave-hearted Children of Timor (lit)</i>
Kotis	<i>Komando Taktis</i>	<i>Tactical Command</i>
Linud	<i>Lintas Udara</i>	<i>Airborne Infantry</i>
Mahidi	<i>Mati Hidup Integrasi Dengan Indonesia</i>	<i>Live or die for integration with Indonesia (militia based in Ainaro)</i>
Nanggala		<i>Code-name for Special Forces Command</i>
Operation Kikis		<i>"Fence of Legs" Operation</i>
OPJT	<i>Organização Popular Juventude de Timor</i>	<i>Timorese Popular Youth Organisation</i>
OPMT	<i>Organização Popular de Mulher Timor</i>	<i>Popular Women's Organisation of Timor</i>
OV-10 (Bronco)		<i>US-built bomber aircraft sold to Indonesia</i>
Pemda	<i>Pemerintah Daerah (Tingkat I / II)</i>	<i>Local government (Level I / II)</i>
SGI	<i>Satuan Gabungan Intelijen</i>	<i>Joint Intelligence Unit</i>

TBO	<i>Tenaga Bantuan Operasi</i>	<i>Operation Assistant</i>
TNI	<i>Tentara Nasional Indonesia</i>	<i>Indonesian National Military (new name after the restructuring of the Indonesian military from 1 April 1999)</i>
Trabalhista	<i>Partido Trabalhista</i>	<i>Trabalhista party (lit: Labour party)</i>
UDT	<i>União Democrática de Timorese</i>	<i>Timorese Democratic Union</i>
UNAMET	<i>Associação Social Democrática Timorese</i>	<i>UN Mission in East Timor</i>
Unetim	<i>União Nacional dos Estudantes de Timor</i>	<i>National Association of Timorese Students</i>
UNMISET		<i>UN Mission of Support in East Timor</i>
UNTAET		<i>UN Transitional Administration in East Timor</i>

