



# COMISSÃO DE ACOLHIMENTO, VERDADE E RECONCILIAÇÃO DE TIMOR LESTE

## *ESCRITORIO NACIONAL*

24 January 2003

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
Washington D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to you on behalf of East Timor's Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR), which has been mandated by the United Nations and the government of East Timor to seek the truth regarding human rights violations committed in East Timor between April 1974 and October 1999.

In an UN-sponsored referendum held on August 30, 1999 the people of East Timor voted overwhelmingly for their independence and for an end to twenty-four years of Indonesian occupation, following Indonesia's December 7, 1975 invasion of our country. The entry of United Nations forces marked the formal end of the conflict in East Timor, but many East Timorese have yet to learn about the fate of loved ones lost during East Timor's 1975 civil war and Indonesia's subsequent invasion and occupation. The clarification of the circumstances of the death, displacement and suffering of hundreds of thousands of East Timorese is vital to the process of national reconciliation and the establishment of a genuine and lasting peace.

It is in this spirit that we respectfully request your assistance in clarifying a selected number of historically significant events and especially egregious cases of human rights abuses. Information pertaining to the cases mentioned in the addendum to this letter, to the plans and policies of the parties to the conflict, and to the international context in which these events took place, will go a long way towards preventing the recurrence of such atrocities, which have been condemned by the international community and by all sectors of East Timorese society.

In the past, the United States has made military assistance to Indonesia conditional upon a process of accountability for perpetrators of human rights abuses. Moreover, United States citizens have repeatedly expressed concern about human rights abuses in East Timor and focused the attention of your government on these issues. Given the invaluable documentation recently released by your administration on human rights abuses in countries like Argentina, we believe that your agencies are likely to have information not only on specific cases of human rights abuses, but also on the activities of military units and militias, military strategies and operations and on the course of historical events in East Timor.

*Direcção do Correio:* P.O. Box 144, Dili, Timor Leste  
*Direcção da Sede:* Antigo complexo UNAMET/CNRT  
Rua de Caikoli, Balide Dili, Timor Leste

**Tel:** +670 (390) 312210, ext. 4513

**Mobile** +61 (0) 407 394 957

**Email:** [info@easttimor-reconciliation.org](mailto:info@easttimor-reconciliation.org)

**Internet:** [www.easttimor-reconciliation.org](http://www.easttimor-reconciliation.org)

East Timor, by forming the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation, has demonstrated its commitment to shedding full light on the events relating to East Timor's civil war and Indonesia's invasion and occupation. The Government of the United States played a crucial role in supporting the United Nations referendum in East Timor in 1999, as well as the INTERFET and UNTAET forces which helped shepherd East Timor to independence on May 20, 2002. The United States government has also provided generous support to the work of the CAVR. At this juncture, the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation is relying on your continued good will and sincere commitment to help us put the painful events of the last twenty seven years into perspective and to alleviate the suffering of the people of East Timor, particularly those hundreds of thousands of victims and their families who were subjected to human rights abuses and acts of violence.

Information in possession of the United States Government is essential to obtaining a comprehensive and objective picture of this period. All parties concerned in East Timor have pledged their full support to the process of recovery, truth and reconciliation, but the Commission cannot be sure that the materials and evidence available in East Timor will be sufficient to reach firm conclusions about a number of key events. This is especially true given the limited time frame within which the CAVR must work to achieve its mandate. Government archives as accurate and comprehensive as those kept by the United States Government could, in many instances, provide essential information for supporting or dismissing certain allegations of human rights abuses.

We hope and trust that you, Mr. President, will provide active assistance to this Commission in the ongoing task of consolidating peace and reconciliation in East Timor. We are confident of your commitment to the vital objectives of our endeavour, and are certain that documenting this history will be the most effective way of preventing violence and human rights abuses in the future.

We are of course at your disposal for any further information which you may deem necessary in consideration of our request.

Sincerely yours,

Aniceto Guterres Lopes  
CHAIR, CAVR

CC President Jose Alexandre Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao  
Dr Jose Ramos Horta, Senior Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

## **ANNEX**

The mandate of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor requires the investigation of cases of human rights abuses and acts of violence related to the conflict in East Timor from 1974-1999. The Commission is actively soliciting and gathering information from witnesses, including surviving victims, families of victims and persons or institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, with information relevant to these investigations.

The historical nature of our mandate permits reliance on many types of sources.

### **Historical Aspects**

In addition to information on specific human rights cases, the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation is mandated to clarify the historical, political and social context in which human rights violations took place.

For that reason, the CAVR requests U.S. documents which substantively concern the following issues, themes and time periods:

*1. Killings, forced relocation and destruction, 1975-1983, 1991, 1999:*

In the years immediately following the invasion of East Timor and in the months leading up to and following the August 30, 1999 ballot the Indonesian armed forces and their militia proxies perpetrated numerous massacres against civilian communities across the country. These periods represent a central focus of the Commission's investigations. Consequently, the CAVR seeks any records concerning the phenomenon of violence during these periods, as well as information on massacres of particular infamy and relevance. They include:

December 1975-November 1978, Killings following Indonesian invasion

November 1978, Massacre at foot of Vadaboro mountain in the Matebian range

1977-1979, Famine in East Timor claims the lives of tens of thousands of civilians, prompting a visit to East Timor by the US Ambassador to Indonesia in September 1978 and the entry of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in September 1979 and the ICRC in October 1979

March-April 1979, Killings in Fato Berliu, following the surrender of East Timorese to Indonesian forces

April-May, 1979, Killings in Los Palos, Kelikai, Uatolari, Uatocarabau, Viqueque, Ossu, Bagaia, and hamlets on southern slopes of Mount Matebian

June 1980, Indonesian military 'Fence of Legs' (Pagar Betis) operations

September 1981, Massacre at the Shrine of St Anthony, near Lacluta

August 1983, Indonesian military 'Clean Sweep' (Sapu Bersih) operation, including at Mt Bibileu, north of Kraras, West of River Be Tuku.

August 21-2, 1983, Massacre in the village of Kraras, near Viqueque

November 12, 1991, Massacre at Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili

April 6, 1999, Massacre at church in Liquica, west of Dili

April 12-23, 1999, abduction, torture and killing of six people in Cailaco, Bobonaro

April 17, 1999, Massacre at home of independence leader Manuel Carrascalao in Dili

August 31, 1999, Militia attacks in Dili, Gleno, Ermera, Aileu, Ambeno and Maliana, leaving 11 killed, including 3 United Nations local staff

September 5-20, 1999, Indonesian police, armed forces personnel and East Timorese militia groups force an estimated 250,000 Timorese from their homes and across the border into West Timor and other parts of Indonesia by foot, vehicle, plane, and boat

September 6, 1999, Massacre at Ave Maria Church in Suai

September 8, 1999, Massacre of East Timorese at police headquarters in Maliana

September 8-10, 1999, Killing of numerous Timorese civilians in the enclave of Oecussi

September 21, 1999, Killing of Dutch journalist Sander Thoenes in Becora suburb of Dili, East Timor

September 25, 1999, A Tim Alfa militia group ambushes a vehicle taking a church delegation to Baucau, killing nine, including two nuns

September 5-16, 1999, burning, looting and destruction of homes, buildings, and infrastructure across territory of East Timor by Indonesian military personnel and militias

## *2. Militias, 1998-1999:*

The CAVR seeks any finished intelligence, analysis and reports that substantively concern the phenomenon of paramilitary militias in East Timor including their origins, memberships, operation, financing, and links to Indonesian military during the 1998-1999 period, especially regarding the

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following:

1. The Laksuar militia group, operating in the town of Covalima
2. The Mahidi militia group, operating in Ainaro district
3. The Besi Merah Putih militia group, operating in Liquica district
4. The Halilinatar militia group, operating in Bobonaro district
5. The Aitarak militia group, operating in Dili district
6. The Tim Alfa militia group, operating in the area of Lautem
7. The Gada Paksi militia group
8. The Saka/Sera militia group, operating in Baucau district
9. The 59-75 Fighters/Makikit militia group, operating in Viqueque district
10. The Ablai militia group, operating in the area of Manufahi
11. The AHI militia group, operating in Aileu district
12. The Sakunar militia group, operating in the Oecussi enclave

*3. Weapons sales, military aid and military training, 1975-1980:*

a.) During this period the United States sold weapons to Indonesia under the FMS program. The CAVR would greatly appreciate documents relating to the following weapons sales and deliveries to Indonesia

December 1975-June 1976 reported suspension of U.S. military assistance to Indonesia

1976-1977 delivery of (16) Rockwell OV-10 'Bronco' counterinsurgency aircraft

1978 order of (16) McDonnell Douglas A-4M 'Skyhawk II' attack aircraft

1978 delivery of (16) Bell 205 UH-1H 'Iroquis' or 'Huey' transport helicopters

1978 delivery of (58) Cadillac Gage Textron V-150 'Commando' armoured personnel carriers

1979 February licensing and export of (15,000) Colt M-16 rifles and ammunition to Indonesia

1980 delivery of (6) Northrop Grumman F-5E 'Tiger II' Fighter aircraft

1980 delivery of (4) Northrop Grumman F-5F 'Tiger II' Fighter aircraft

1980 delivery of (16) McDonnell Douglas A-4 'Skyhawk' attack aircraft

b) The CAVR would also greatly appreciate documents related to the provision of military training and equipment to special Indonesian military and police units during this period, especially the RPKAD, OSPUS, Kopassus, and Brimob.

#### **Release of documents to the CAVR:**

The CAVR faces the great challenge of collecting an enormous amount of information in a short amount of time (we expect to complete our work early in 2004, with the possibility of a six-month extension). We respectfully urge that relevant agencies give the CAVR's request expedited treatment, so that we might obtain documents in sufficient time to incorporate them into our final report and recommendations. To facilitate your government's ability to respond to this request in a timely manner, we also urge the phased release of documents as they become available and that documents pertaining to the 1975-1985 period be given priority of release.

*CAVR FOIA letter*