



TIMOR-LESTE

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE

Head of state: José Manuel Ramos-Horta
Head of government: Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão
Death penalty: abolitionist for all crimes
Population: 1.2 million
Life expectancy: 62.1 years
Under-5 mortality: 92/91 per 1,000

Impunity persisted for perpetrators of gross human rights violations committed during Indonesian occupation between 1975 and 1999. The police and military were implicated in alleged ill-treatment and excessive use of force. Despite the enactment of a law against domestic violence, levels of domestic violence remained high.

Background

In February, the mandate of the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) was extended for another year.

Police and security forces

The resumption of primary policing responsibilities by the Timor-Leste National Police Force (Policia Nacional Timor-Leste, PNTL) progressed steadily, and PNTL internal disciplinary mechanisms were strengthened. However, reports continued of human rights violations committed by police and military personnel, including ill-treatment and excessive use of force. There were at least 59 allegations of human rights violations by the national police and 13 by the military.

Justice system

Judicial and accountability mechanisms remained weak. Attempts to hold to account those responsible for the violence that erupted in 2006 after one third of the military were dismissed remained slow. In March, 24 people were convicted of involvement in the February 2008 attacks on the President and Prime Minister. However, in August the President pardoned 23 of them, including ex-insurgent leader Gastão Salsinha. Civil society organizations expressed concern that the pardons called into question the credibility of the justice system.

- On 26 March, Domingos Noronha (aka Mau Buti), a former Mahidi Militia member, was sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment for serious crimes committed in 1999. He was found guilty on three counts of murder.

Violence against women and girls

In May, the Law Against Domestic Violence was passed, providing a framework for government, police and community responses to domestic violence. The Law defined domestic violence broadly to include physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence, and provided for a range of services to victims. However, many cases of domestic violence continued to be resolved through traditional justice mechanisms which did not provide full redress to victims. Levels of domestic violence remained high.

Impunity

The Timor-Leste Office of the Ombudsman for Human Rights and Justice and the Indonesian National Human Rights Commission signed a memorandum of understanding in January on the implementation of recommendations of the joint Indonesia-Timor-Leste Commission of Truth and Friendship (CTF) and of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR). The content of the memorandum was not made public.

In early July, two draft laws establishing a National Reparations Programme and an “Institute for Memory”, mandated to implement recommendations of the CTF and CAVR, were presented for public consultation. Parliament was scheduled to debate the laws in late September; however, the debate was delayed until February 2011.

There was very little progress in addressing past serious human rights violations, including crimes against humanity, committed in Timor-Leste during Indonesian occupation (1975-1999). President Ramos-Horta rejected calls from national and international NGOs for an international tribunal for past crimes, although he said he would not oppose it should the UN Security Council decide to establish one. The Serious Crimes Investigation Team continued to investigate serious human rights violations committed in 1999.

Amnesty International visits/reports

- Timor-Leste: International Criminal Court – Justice in the shadow (ASA 57/001/2010)

(Excerpt from Amnesty International Annual Report 2011)