

## A short-story from the voiceless 'lorikeets'. Recollection of the Santa-Cruz Massacre, November 12, 1991.

My truth recollection about the events transpired in 1991.

**By: Egas Alves**

My name is Egas Alves, and known by the clandestine name as "Fai TARA" or for short "TARA". Before embarking in writing this short -story, first of all, please allow to humbly to emphasize that, it is not my intention to represent myself throw this short-story or to reclaim myself as a hero or to reveal that I had contributed to the struggle of Timor-Leste. Heroes are those that had given their life to this struggle, those martyrs of the nation who had buried in the graveyard and those that had never been found. With my respect I would like pay my tribute to the martyrs of the nation.

I am writing this short- story because I have been asked by friends and one of whom is Mr Carlos Lopes (Saky). Carlos asked me to transcribe this short-story to explain the passage of the RENETIL Organisation during the Timor-Lest struggle for the Independence. This short-story may well served to exhibit the involvement of the RENETIL members during the preparation to welcome the Portuguese Parliamentarian's Delegation to Timor-Leste in 1991, and later their direct involvement in the preparation of November 12, 1991 demonstration which is known as ' Santa-Cruz Massacre".

I would commence this short-story by quoting the lyric of the song "*Ohin dia 12 de Novembro*" which I composed during my time in a hidden place after the Santa-Cruz Massacre on November 12, 1991.

### Ohin dia 12 de Novembro

Loron matan nakfera, Ohin dia doze de Novembro  
Timor Oan Hakilar nia susar, ba Mundo rai klan,

Loron matan nakfera, ho ran ho isin ami buka  
Dalan naroman ba ami nia rain, ukun rasik ami nia rain

Ref: Ho ran ami hakerek, ho isin ami kuda  
2x Ba ami alin sira, Inang Feton sira  
Historia Timor Loro Sae...

Inang Aman ho tanis, la'o buka ami nia isin  
Namkari lemo Rai Timor nia laran, Ba se los maka imi husu

Ho matan imi rega, Ai-funang kari ami rate laek  
Ami isin lakon husi imi nia sorin, Temi netik ami nia naran....

Composed by: Egas Alves (Fai TARA).  
Colmera-TL, December 1991

It can be listened from YouTube, sang by: **Elvis Ximenes**  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N\\_GhG7GWyvc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_GhG7GWyvc)

Later this song was recorded in a simple tape recorder in a house at-Jalan Pulau Seribu, Sanglah, Denpasar-Bali, soon after I went back to Bali in October 1992. I was the main vocalist and the person who assisted me to play the guitar was Mr. Joao Gama. My friends presented at that time were Mr Anito Matos, Aquilinho Soriano, Jose Pompeia and others who were staying in that house.

Soon after that I managed to smuggle a copy of the song to my companion, Mr Fernando La Sama (the actual Vice-Prime Minister of Timor-Leste) and the lyric of that song was to Mr Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao (the actual Prime Minister of Timor-Leste) at the Cipinang Prison-Jakarta where both of them were political prisoners at that time. Today this song was occasionally played at the Radio & Television of Timor-Leste (RTTL) Channel in Timor-Leste.

I would like to start this short-story from June 1991, an epoch of school holidays where many of the Timorese students studying in Bali and Java returned to Dili, Timor-Leste. I was one of those students that went back to Dili. At that time I was a student of Civil Engineering studying at Udayana-University Bali, in 1987. While studying I was recruited to become a member of the RENETIL organisation soon after it was established.

In 1990 when I took my first holiday vacation in Dili, I was closely work with Mr Gregorio Saldanha, one of the Executive Committee of Clandestine Front (EC/CF) member. The main reason was I knew Mr Gregorio since we were kids and always together in our adolescent life before I left to continue my study in Bali. At that time almost every day we went to Mr Agostinho's house ( now deceased) in Lahane, brother of Mr Jose Manuel (Nakfilak) as this was a centre for the meeting of so many Timorese youth involved in the clandestine movement.

From there I met with Mr Constancio Pinto and other members of the Clandestine Movement. I can said that during that initial period, the house of Mr Agostinho was a place of reunion for all the youth Timorese nationalist. For my surprised was almost all of those youth Timorese ate lunch and sometimes dinner at Mr Agostinho's house, though just the boiling noodles or red beans boil with the steam rice. Precisely in that house, we discussed about the preparation for the visit of the Portuguese Parliamentarian's Delegation.

During that period (June-July 1990), I accompanied Mr Jose Ximenes (Siak), the Vice Secretary of RENNETIL to attend most of the EC/CF meetings organised or held secretly in various places in Dili. Some of these meetings were held in my

house at Santa-Cruz village in Dili. One of the meeting that important and most notable was the meeting that held in the house of my cousin Francisco (known as Chico Bobonaro) at Audian-Dili. In that meeting we discussed about the proposed plan by the RENETIL organisation for the visit of the Portuguese Parliamentarian's Delegation with the code name " **Operação Aurora** ". Attended that meeting were including a priest from the Catholic Church, Father Domingos Maubere, members of the other clandestine groups and of the EC/CF.

A year later in June 1991, when I went back to Dili for the school vacation I continued to work closely with the members of EC/CF and attended most of their meeting for the preparation to welcome the Portuguese Parliamentarians Delegation which was schedule to visit Timor-Leste around October 1991.

The preparation to welcome the delegation was intensified between July and August in that year. At that time RENETIL leader Mr Fernando La Sama, the current Vice-Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, also came to Dili. Instead of staying at his house in Lahane, Mr La Sama choose to stay with me in my place at Santa-Cruz in Dili. This was to facilitate our underground work in Dili and our coordination with the EC/CF members and other groups in the clandestine movement. Included on his schedule was a visit to Mr Xanana Gusmao in his hiding place in Kakau-Lidun, Dili. Even though La Sama never mentioned his visits to Xanana but on our conversation I can understand that he had met with Mr Xanana Gusmao. After a week in Dili, La Sama went back to Bali and then was captured by the Indonesian Intelligence soon after the Santa-Cruz Massacre in November 1991, and was jailed in Cipinang-prison Jakarta.

The situation in Dili at that time was precarious. The operation launched by the Indonesian Intelligence (SGI) known as "Ninjas operations" was totally brought Dili to a dead town when the night felt. As a member of the clandestine movement I also need to be vigilant. Almost every night I need to stayed outside the house until the rise of the dawn. This was to prevent the unexpectedly visit by the Indonesian Intelligence that could come at anytime during the night.

When La Sama went back to Bali I remained in Dili. I heard from La Sama and also from the news on the Netherlands and ABC Radio broadcasted in Indonesian language that the Portuguese Parliamentarian Delegation has been cancelled. It was due to the Indonesian authorities rejecting the inclusion of MS Jill Joliffe (Journalist) in the delegation. This cancellation spurred some frustration within the youth movement and again lowered our morale.

The ramification of the above decision escalated the situation in Dili. It became terrifying when the Ninjas and Indonesian Police stormed into the Motael Church on 28 October 1991 and killed Mr. Sebastiao Gomes, a member of the clandestine movement. As the Indonesian Intelligence increased its pressured on the Clandestine movement, thus between 2-4 November 1991, Mr Constancio Pinto

went into hiding including Mr Gregorio Saldanha and others. Members of EC/CF that still operating included Mr Juvencio de Jesus, Mr Jacinto Alves, Mr Meno (Alturas), Mr Lemos. Mr Francisco Branco was one of the EC/CF member but I rarely met him in different places as the others members. The only occasion we met was at his place in Balide where we had a meeting with a Timorese student from Kupang, the brother of Dr. Fernando Bonaparte.

In Dili, RENETIL members who always came to my place for meetings or to find out some news were Mr Jose Ave Maria (Siak), Mr Benjamin Martins, Julio Cairo, Miguel Ximenes (deceased), Abel Martins and others. Non-RENETIL members that also regularly participated in our everyday discussion were Mr Anacleto Ribeiro, and Mr. Joao Gregorio. Especially, Anacleto, Joao Gregorio, Benjamin, Julio and Miguel were actively involved in the designing of banners, posters, pamphlets and flags which was preparing inside my house at Santa-Cruz Village, Dili. There were other people from Aituri-Laran that were also helped in the designing the posters. It was a big preparation of the clandestine movement at that time that was well-coordinated.

All of these preparations became fruitless when we heard that the visit of the delegation has been cancelled. We were really upset with that cancellation because we had put so much effort into the preparation. I was readying myself to go back to Bali when I received a call from Mr Fernando La Sama to inform to the EC/CF about the visit of UN Special Rapporteur, Mr Peter Kooijman who would visit Dili in November 1991. La Sama asked me to continue liaising with the EC/CF and seek possibilities for a plan of action in order to gain the attention of Mr Peter Kooijman in our struggle for Independence.

I passed that information to Mr Constancio Pinto and Mr Juvencio de Jesus when they came to my place. Mr Constancio Pinto had been in hiding since approx. 2-4 November 1991. He made the arrangement to meet his wife, Mrs Gabriela Lopes Pinto at my place where we had lunch together. After few hours Mr Constancio left us and went into his hiding place and his wife went back home. Constancio asked me if I could find out about the schedule of Mr Peter's visit to Bishop Belo's house at Lecidere.

On the 10th November 1991, between 09:00-10:00 am, Mr Juvencio de Jesus came to my place and asked me if we had a plan for demonstrating in front of the UN Special Rapporteur? We talked about all the possibilities and consequences that might result from the demonstration if we decided to go ahead and organise it. We discussed it but did not make any decision. At that time my fiancé Filomena Guterres, who is now my wife was presented but did not take part in the discussion.

Filomena (Mena) was a member of the RENTIL and joined the organisation while she was studying at the School Assistant Inspector Hygiene or Sekolah Pembantu Penilik Hygiene (SPPH) at Surabaya Indonesia. The senior RENNETIL members who were presented when Filomena and Tomasia Sousa (Nonoi) made their

declaration to join the organisation were Mr Carlos da Silva, Mr Inacio Leite, Mr Julio Abel, brother of Father Filomeno Jacob.

Within an hour of Mr Juvencio leaving my house, a messenger sent by Mr Constancio Pinto, known as "Oe-Cussi", came to my house. He gave me three notes one of which was addressed to me and other to Mr. Gregorio Saldanha. In that note he asked me to look at the possibilities of organising a demonstration in conjunction with the other members of the EC/CF who were still free and contactable.

Immediately I asked my neighbours to contact Mr Afonso Maria and Mr Gregorio Saldanha to come to my place that evening around 7:00 - 8:00. I then went to the house of Mr Jaco Fernandes (known as kepala Desa Santa-Cruz - deceased) who was actively involved in the underground work, and invited him to the meeting. Coincidentally, one of my cousins Mr Jacinto Alves was also at the house of Mr Jaco Fernandes. Mr Jacinto was a member of the EC/CF. Then precisely at the agreed time, people who were invited to the meeting were presented. The meeting took place at my Grandmother's house (Isabel Alves - deceased), just few yards from my house. My grandmother was living with my Auntie Sao Alves in that house.

Present at the meeting on the night of 10th November 1991 were Mr Gregorio Saldanha, Mr Afonso Maria, Mr Jacinto Alves, Mr Jaco Fernandes (deceased) and myself. We started the meeting by looking at the letter sent to us by Mr Constancio Pinto and then discussed all the possibilities as to whether it might be favourable to mobilise the people to the demonstration or just leave this opportunity and wait for another opportunity? After a long discussion we all agreed that a demonstration was possible and potentially extreme repression from the Indonesian Intelligence would lessen due to the presence of the UN Special Rapporteur, Mr Peter Kooijman and some foreign journalist that we knew at that time in Timor-Leste.

Then we decided to allocate tasks to each member present at the meeting. Mr Gregorio Saldanha would lead the demonstration assisted by Mr Afonso Maria, Mr Jacinto Alves would talk to the group of martial art Setia Hati (SH). The SH groups would be responsible for the security during the demonstration. The task allocated to me was to report on all the stages of the demonstration, including the collection of some photos and data to be sent to the outside world, for example, Bali, Australia and Portugal.

The plan that we decided upon was as follows:

The demonstration is to be started soon after the mass of the commemoration of the two weeks of the killing of our companion, Sebastiao Gomes at the Motael Church. The procession will go towards Santa-Cruz Cemetery. Soon after the scattering of flowers at the Sebastiao graveyard, the procession will continue walk towards the house of Bishop Belo at Licide and will finish in front of the Mahkota Hotel Dili.

The demonstrators will need to walk in middle of the street and the martial groups SH will be rallying on both sides to prevent any disturbances from people outside.

We also decided that Mr Gregorio will contact Ms Catarina and Mr Valentim (Bidau) to be our spoke persons during the rally. Ms Caterina will pray the Rosary of Our Lady and Mr Valentim will lead the yell "Viva" during the interval of each rosary.

From the night of 10th November 1991, we started to work for the preparation of the demonstration. On the 11 November 1991 we moved our centre from my house to Mr Joao Paulo's house at Audian-Dili. Mr Joao Paulo is one of our best friend and one of the members of the clandestine movement. From there we provided detailed information of the plan to the other clandestine members from other nuclei around Dili.

Included in that, one of the family members of Sebastiao Gomes - Martyr, came to my house to request the detailed information of the plan and how they will take the flowers to the Church and proceeded to the Santa-Cruz Cemetery. I did explain about the proceedings where the family should walk in the very front of the rally and follow my demonstrators.

In the early morning of the 12th November 1991 around 5:00 am, most of the people aware of the plan had been awake and some had been walking towards Motael Church. Prior to this Mena and I went to her father's house in Colmera in order to get the United Nation's flag which was sewn, along with banners, by my sister-in-law Alzira Acasio+ Guterres.

From Colmera we walked across to the Motael Church. On our way we saw some of the Timorese youth who just got off from the bus and joined us walking in the same direction to the church. Among those youths, one that we most recognised was Mr Donques Neves, who is currently residing in Northern Ireland. Donques was wearing a high school uniform (SMA uniform) at that time. When we reached the Church we also saw Mr Agostinho (Jose Manuel's brother) and Mr Nuno Santos (known at that time as Nuno Alturas) both of whom were sitting on the top of the wall in the front of a house near the Church.

At the Motael Church, Mena and I stood on the right side of the Church. There were also Mr Gregorio Saldanha and other friends who stood at that spot. The mass was celebrated by Father Alberto Ricardo da Silva (the current Bishop of Diocese Dili). In the middle of the mass, Mr Gregorio, Mr Valentim and I sat down on the ground and continued to discuss the procession and gave more relevant information to Valentim.



However, I had never been told by Valentim that he gave a microphone to Mr Filipe Rodrigues Pereira.

Soon after the mass was ended and the crowd went outside from the Church yard, the microphone was turned into a siren sound to signal the start of the rally, with the direction towards Santa-Cruz Cemetery. As there were so many people who marched on the street that day, we the organisers started to totally lose control over the demonstrators and as the result we just followed with the stream of the rally. At that moment the people started to yell 'Viva Timor-Leste', "Viva the People of Timor-Leste" and slowly walked towards Santa-Cruz Cemetery. However, this slow pace did not long and just few metres from the Church most of the people started to run while continuing yelling the revolutionary words.

Thus when we reach the gate of the Dili harbour, Mena and I decided to go out from the rally and grabbed a Taxi to drop us in my place at Santa-Cruz. From my house to the Santa-Cruz Cemetery is approximately 400-500 metres. So we decide to wait until all the manifestants reached the Cemetery and we would then go to join them. While waiting to go back to Santa-Cruz Cemetery, I went to my cousin Atono's house (Current live in Sydney) to borrow his phone to ring Bali. But it was unsuccessful therefore I rang Mr Antonio Barbosa (Mrs Mena Lim husband) and asked him to ring Australia to announce that the rally had started. Then, I went to Mr Jaco Fernandes' (deceased) house which just across the road from Atono's house, to ask for a video camera in order to take to the Cemetery.

However, on my way to there I found a Timorese boy who ran towards us with a blood on his face. While I was asking the boy what had happened to him, Mr Jaco came by on a motor bike and joined me in the middle of the road to see what had happened to the boy. At that time my cousin Milena Alves (Jacinto's sister now live in Bali) was also appeared from her house and stood in their front yard to see what had happened on the street.

The boy had not quite finished his story about what had happened when Mena joined us. Looking at the crowd starting come his way, the boy started running away towards the Santa-Cruz Cemetery. Then, three of us Mena, Jaco and I also walked out from this scene and went to join the crow at the Santa-Cruz Cemetery. However, after just a few meters walking we were stunned to hear multiple gun shots. We both ran back home while Jaco took his motor bike and went a different way.

When we reached home some of the youth had also arrived and got inside the house and some even went into the bottom of the bed in our bedroom. Immediately I ran to my cousin Atono's house again to borrow his phone. I tried to ring Bali but it was engaged and so tried to ring friends in Australia but they were also engaged. I tried to ring Portugal, the office of Mr Jose Ramos Horta. Fortunately Mr Ramos Horta answered and listened as I reported the incident to very distressed and panicked. Then when I came out from the house, another cousin, Ani Branco, was

also in a panic and crying from witnessing the young people who went inside her house.

As the situation on the street in Santa-Cruz deteriorated with more and more presence of the Indonesian troops, I asked my cousin Atono to take me away from the place immediately. Prior to leaving Atono's house I rang to ask my brother-in-law Manulito Leong for help me to take us to a safe place. By using the funeral car, Atono drove Mena and I to Bairro-Central where Manulito was waiting. However on our way there we met Manulito on his way to pick me up. Then we were transferred to Manulito's car and drove to Mr Agostinho's (Father-in-Law) house in Colmera.

There in Colmera, I took the sanctuary of a room at the back of the house. In that room there were also several of Mena's cousins who also participated in the demonstration, including Mr Abilio, Mr Raimundo, and Mr Alino. There were also two others Mr Mau Mea and Mr Carlos (Mena's God Brother) but they were not participated in the demonstration.

While in Colmera, my mother occasionally visited me and brought news from my bother Tonito Alves who was also interned at the hospital due to the wound he received at the Santa-Cruz Cemetery. Tonito was interned in the same hospital with Mr Gregorio Saldanha. From hospital, Tonito, send me a message that Mr Gregorio Saldanha asked me to continue with the work of the clandestine movement as he will never mention my name in any inquiry conducted by the Indonesian Intelligence. Therefore, I decided to continue my work by liaising with Mena's uncle, Mr Henrique Belmiro and Manulito Leong, who had very special connection with the Commander in Chief Mr Xanana Gusmao.

On New Year's Day, Manulito Leong drove me back home to visit my parents at Santa-Cruz however it was just a short visit due to my parent's concern for my safety. They advised me it was not unusual for the Indonesian Intelligence (wearing civilian uniform) regularly walked by our house either during the day time or at night.

Between February/March 1992, we heard that most of the Indonesian Intelligence (SGI) members were rotated, which means that those in Dili went back to their country and the new members came to replace them. As per usual when they rotate, (most of the clandestine members know about this) the old Intelligence members rarely leave any crucial information to the new ones. We later found out that this was due to their individual tactics to get promoted quickly to a high rank instead of leave the information for the others to be successful in the operation and get promote ahead of them. We never knew why this happened, but in fact it was the case; and thus the clandestine movement took it as an opportunity. So, fearing, nothing I began to get out from the house in Colmera and went back to Santa-Cruz up until October 1992 which is when I went back to Bali to continue my study.



In Bali, the base of RENETIL had also been dismantled and the leader, Mr Fernando La Sama, had been incarcerated in Cipinang Prison-Jakarta. In Bali some of my friends immediately advised me to not undertake any movement in terms of clandestine work as the situation was tense and people still mistrusted one another.

As the situation was fragile and that I could be arrested by the Indonesian authorities any time due to my direct involvement in the 12 November 1991, I decided to record my song "Ohin dia 12 de Novembro" dedicated to my brothers and sisters who died at the hands of the Indonesian troops at the Santa-Cruz Cemetery.

- F I N I S H -

**A poem I composed for my English Class in Darwin, Australia.**

**Wednesday, May 31, 1995 - 10:00**

**By: Egas Alves**

Today in my city..... the sky is cloudy

Turn off the view of the sunrise

Today in my city... The people is awaken to sound of the roosters

Without knowing what is the melancholy that will happen to their sons  
and daughters who are living there

Today in my city.....mothers kneeling and crying

"God, where is my son" ? "God help me...help me....show me the way to  
find my son"

My God.... my God ...my Saviour

Only blood that I found plummeted on the ground of the Santa Cruz's  
graveyard without the corpse of my son..

Today in my city .....

With blood and body the young Timorese search the way to their  
freedom

With the blood and body.... the young Timorese writing to their brothers  
& sisters, a new page of the Timor-Leste's history.

Today in my city... Mothers crying .....dropped their tears to watering the  
flowers that scatter on the gravestone of Santa Cruz Cemetery

Their bodies have disappeared from our side

But their Names have imprinted in the wholeheartedly of the Timorese  
People

Today ...12 November 1991, Dili East Timor.

