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Aliansi Nasional Timor-Leste ba Tribunál Internasionál
(THE TIMOR-LESTE NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR AN INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL)

Tel: 77289241 or 77179655 / 77402231

e-mail: lanarra.del@gmail.com, atino@laohamutuk.org ka moniz@jsmp.minihub.org

Press Release

COMMEMORATION OF THE LIQUISA CHURCH MASSACRE ON 5-6 APRIL 1999:
“Families of the Victim continue to live with uncertainty”

Once again, on 5-6 April, Christians will come together with the families of victims to commemorate the anniversary of the Liquisa Church Massacre. This massacre happened in April 1999 and led to the death or disappearance of more than 200 people.

The Liquisa Massacre was perpetrated by members of the Indonesian Mobile (Brimob) Police, the Indonesian Military and the pro-Indonesia militia group, Besi Merah Putih (BMP – "Red and White Iron"). To this day, these perpetrators continue to enjoy impunity and freedom from formal accountability for their actions. In 2012, ex-militia member from BMP, Valentim Lavio, was convicted by the Dili District Tribunal and sentenced to more than 9 years in prison. However, he managed to escape to Atambua in West Timor, Indonesia and as yet there is no mechanism by which to extradite Valentim Lavio so that he can comply with his sentence.

Aside from the massacre in Liquisa, there are a number of other massacres which the Timorese people commemorate in April each year. These include the massacre in Cailaco, Maliana, which led to the execution of at least 7 people by the Indonesian military and pro-Indonesia militia. This incident occurred just a week after the Liquisa Massacre, on 12 April. In that same week, on 17 April, another significant massacre took place at the residence of Mr Manuel Crasacalao, a prominent Timorese Independence leader and former-Indonesian Parliamentarian, which saw at least 12 people murdered.

In 2012, when the State of Timor-Leste presented their report to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the Government agreed and committed to implementing the recommendations delivered to them by the UN Human Rights Council, in particular to adopt the recommendations of the Reception, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CAVR) and the Commission on Truth and Friendship (CTF) and to accelerate the process of adopting the draft laws on Reparations and the Memorial Institute, which have now expired in National Parliament. As well, they agreed to continue efforts to promote truth, justice, memorialisation and reparations for the grave human rights violations that were committed between 1974 and 1999.

Based on the demands of victims and their families, which have been formalised in the recommendations of CAVR and CTF, the State of Timor-Leste also has an obligation to sign and ratify the International Convention on the Protection of All People from Enforced Disappearances. Unfortunately, the Government's commitment on this also continues to waver.

ANTI is also aware that there is a commission which, together with the families of the victims in Liquisa, has been exhuming the remains of victims and is prepared to bring them to the Liquisa Cemetery (Ossuary). From ANTI's observations, communication between the families of victims and the commission has been poor throughout the exhumation process. Moreover, ANTI has received complaints from some family members about the lack of involvement by a forensic team so as to ensure proper identification of the remains. Worse still, in some cases, three or more bodies have been placed together in a single coffin.

Meanwhile, we all know that the brains or principal perpetrators of these massacres are Prabowo Subianto, Wiranto and other individuals. And, as we have all been following, one in particular has become a prime candidate to advance to the Presidential election. From 1980 to 1998, Prabowo, as the Commander of Kostrad and Kopassas, had great influence in devising the massacres that occurred. In particular, the Kraras massacre in Viqueque, which many know by the name "Kampung Janda", and also the Santa Cruz massacre of 1991. Today, Prabowo Subianto is advancing his way towards the Indonesian Presidential Election, continuing to enjoy impunity and avoiding formal accountability for his actions. The first stage will be the Indonesian Parliamentary elections on 9 April 2014, just days after we commemorate this massacre.

Therefore, ANTI is demanding and appealing for the following:

1. To the States of Timor-Leste and Indonesia to prioritise implementation of the recommendations from CTF, especially the establishment of a commission on disappearances and missing persons, because despite regularly holding the Senior Official Meeting (SOM) there has yet to be any concrete results that properly respond to the demands of victims and their families.
2. To the International Community, especially human rights activists, to continue the struggle campaigning to and increasing awareness of the Indonesian People regarding the crimes against humanity which Prabowo has committed in Timor-Leste, Maluku, Papua, Aceh and in other areas of Indonesia in order to prevent and ensure that these criminals cannot become leaders thereby destroying the values of democracy and human rights.
3. To the Government of Timor-Leste, particularly the Commission carrying out the exhumations in Liquisa, Ainaro, Manatutu and other districts, that they must involve forensic teams in these exhumations so that the remains can be examined and their identities known so as to return them to their respective families.
4. To the National Parliament to re-agenda the debate on the draft laws on Reparations and the Memorial Institute which are still sitting in Parliament.

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Sisto dos Santos
ANTI Coordinator