

ISSUES TO WATCH THIS MONTH:

- Youth violence
- Alcohol-Induced Violence
- Violence amongst martial arts groups

SITUATION REVIEW: December 2011

ISSUES TO WATCH

Total Reported Incidents

District	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lautem	2	2	3
Covalima	2	1	5
Dili	13	20	18
Viqueque	5	6	11
Aileu	3	7	3
Ainaro	9	6	4
Ermera	4	2	8
Baucau	6	5	5
Manatutu	4	4	1
Manufahi	6	8	8
Oe-cusse	2	3	1
Liquiça	5	8	6
Bobonaro	3	5	3
Total	64	77	76

Despite a slight reduction in the number of total reported incidents, the pattern of increased violence in many districts during the festive season appears to be continuing.

CONFLICT TRENDS

Youth-Related Violence

Youth-related incidents: 25 (last month 19)
 Martial arts-related incidents: 6 (last month 2)

Many districts continued to experience violent incidents between youth groups throughout December. Individual confrontations between youths tended to escalate into conflicts involving groups of youth from different bairros and aldeias. Most incidents occurred during seasonal parties, either in front of street-front nativity scenes or on the streets resulting in both property destruction and fight-related injuries. In an incident on December 2 in aldeia 'Mate la Hotu', suco Comoro, Dom Aleixo sub-district (Dili), one youth was stabbed with a knife. More such injuries were also reported from Ainaro Vila, Suai Vila, Maliana, Baucau Vila, Bazartete, Fatuberliu and Ossu sub-districts.

Overtuning observations from the previous month, more Martial Arts Groups (MAG) were implicated in violent incidents in December. On December 19 in aldeia Moris Foun, suco Comoro, Dom Aleixo sub-district (Dili) one such confrontation resulted in a death. Investigations are in process, but certain groups continue to engage in martial arts activities at night despite police patrols conducted in the area.

MAG confrontations in Letefoho, Hatolia, Baucau Vila, Dom Aleixo and Bobonaro sub-districts resulted in injuries and destruction of houses. Violent incidents amongst groups continue to arise due to existing rivalries and motivations to seek revenge stemming from previous confrontations. In addition, formal justice processes are often taking too long before a resolution is reached.

After a thorough analysis of the PNTL General Command's report in late December, the decision was taken by the Council of Ministers to suspend the authorization to practice MAG activities that have lately proven to provoke unrest, violence and crime – including a ban on training and practice of martial arts, and the absolute obligation not to mobilize people to join the groups who practice martial arts until 21 December 2012.



Generously supported by the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, Conflict Resolution Unit.



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Politically-charged Conflicts

With the campaign period for the Presidential race approaching, political party consolidation in Viqueque, Dili, Baucau, Aileu and Ermera districts saw an increase in divisions within communities throughout December.

On December 2 in suco Wailili, Baucau Vila, an unidentified assailant torched the house of a political party member who was attending a PD party congress in Dili. Investigations are underway, but the police are yet to identify a suspect.

In Dili, the dispute between opposing ASDT factions continued as the faction in support of Francisco Xavier Amaral refused to acknowledge Gil Alves as the Secretary-General of the party. This was despite the Court of Appeal's decision instructing official recognition of the old party structure.

In Uatulari sub-district of Viqueque, two CNRT supporters were assaulted and stoned by an unknown pair of assailants upon arriving at Ailembata to prepare for party activities. Both victims sustained injuries.

CONFLICT TRENDS

Alcohol-Related Incidents

In the month of December, alcohol consumption continued to heavily influence violent activity amongst youth as well as other community members. Year-end festivities and New Year's gatherings for 2012 encouraged the liberal consumption of alcohol which instigated a greater number of violent incidents as well as cases of domestic violence.

In Same sub-district, an argument amongst three intoxicated men led to fighting which resulted in one death. The case has been investigated by the police and is now awaiting processing at the Suai District Court. More alcohol-related incidents were also witnessed in Lautem, Bazartete, Manatuto Vila, Baucau Vila, Dili, Covalima, Manufahi, Alas, Uatulari and Laulara sub-districts.

Crimes under Investigation

A PNTL member from the Public Order Battalion (BOP) was stabbed by an unidentified assailant on December 30 in aldeia Teka Hudi Laran, suco Lahane, sub-district Vera Cruz (Dili). The case is currently under police investigation.



Incidents also occurred in Viqueque district: the first from Viqueque Vila sub-district which featured an assault on two men who were building a fence around a farming area by two other men who suddenly appeared to attack them. The case is now being processed through the Baucau District Court. The second incident took place at the Carabalho suco office in Viqueque Vila, where unidentified assailants broke into the office and stole sacks of rice that were to be distributed to vulnerable community members. The case is being investigated by the police.

A further incident also occurred in aldeia Central, suco Fuiloro, Lospalos sub-district whereby a secondary school student and a teacher got into an argument, which resulted in the destruction of school facilities.

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Disputes amongst Family Members

Seven incidents of conflicts between family members were reported in December. Frequent family gatherings during the holiday season were often the confrontational backdrop. In Bazartete sub-district (suco Lauhata), a fight occurred between a man and his nephew, but family members quickly stepped in to resolve the situation and no injuries resulted.

Several incidents occurred due to disagreements over marital barlake (dowry). In suco Caraubalho, Viqueque Vila sub-district, a son beat his father because the father demanded the proposed son-in-law to pay barlake before the daughter was given in marriage. The son did not agree with this practice.

Land Disputes

Disputes over land, property and access to natural resources continue to occur frequently. A majority of disputes are centered on ownership issues over residential property, as well as many cases featuring conflicts between farmers over agricultural land usage. In Hatolia (aldeia Arleu, suco Mauubu), an elderly farmer sustained injuries after being beaten by a young man. Other such incidents also occurred in Lautem, Viqueque, Ermera, Manufahi, Oe-cusse and Liquiça districts.

Incidents related to pension payments

In Vemasse sub-district a young man from suco Caucau threatened an elderly person with a machete and forcefully took his \$200 pension payment. In another incident in Ossu sub-district, a young man tore up a list containing the names of veterans. The police have caught and detained the suspect.

Natural Disasters

A number of families lost their houses in the aftermath of natural disasters in December. In aldeia Wealia, suco Uma Kaduak, Laclo sub-district (Manatuto district), heavy rainfall destroyed 22 houses. The Secretariat of State for Natural Disasters (of the Ministry of Social Solidarity) provided humanitarian assistance to affected families. The F-FDTL provided transport to help evacuate affected populations into a more secure area.

CONFLICT RESPONSE

Community Conflict Prevention Activities & National Peacebuilding Events

The Conflict Prevention and Response Network (CPRN) in Manufahi district, supported by Belun, facilitated learning sessions on how to prevent conflicts within communities and prevent electoral violence in Fatuberliu and Alas sub-districts. Through Belun's Dispute Resolution & Mediation program, 8 land disputes involving 18 families were also resolved, strengthening the role of Rede ba Rai and Belun in the mediation of land disputes.

In cooperation with the Civil Society Advisor from the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, Belun hosted a National Seminar to invite political parties to reflect on ways to prevent electoral violence, at the John Paul Salon in Comoro, Dili. Belun also hosted an "Open House" event to share information on land rights.

ABOUT THIS SITUATION REVIEW

This situation review reports on key issues related to violent incidents and trends emerging from data collected through Timor-Leste's Early Warning, Early Response (EWER) system during December 2011. Belun endeavors to share information that is both up-to-date and accurate. Given situations evolve rapidly, we welcome further information which may clarify or update data acquired through EWER. Please email EWER Program Manager Bylah Da Costa: bylah.belun@gmail.com. Image © Jennifer Hill, Belun 2011