

**Refugee Review Tribunal  
AUSTRALIA**

**RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE**

**Research Response Number:** TLS31222  
**Country:** East Timor (Timor L'Este)  
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This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

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**Questions**

- 1. Please provide information on attacks in Dili against Indonesians.**
- 2. Please provide information on the general security situation in Dili.**
- 3. Please provide information on the current state of law enforcement in Dili.**
- 4. Please provide information on treatment of East Timorese in Indonesia.**
- 5. Please provide information on the treatment of East Timorese supporters in Indonesia.**

**RESPONSE**

**1. Please provide information on attacks in Dili against Indonesians.**

There is no information to indicate that the attacks in Dili specifically targeted Indonesians. There are more than 1,000 Indonesians living in East Timor, several were evacuated by the Indonesian Air Force during the recent riots:

Many Indonesians have refused to be evacuated from the Timor-Leste's capital Dili, preferring to stay and guard their homes and businesses, an Indonesian official says. The senior liaison officer at the Indonesian Embassy in Dili, Sr. Comr. Minton Mariati Simanjuntak, said many Indonesians were still in Dili, where they had sought refuge at churches and other religious institutions, Antara news agency reported Thursday.

The Indonesian Air Force evacuated as many as 1,286 Indonesians from the Indonesian Embassy to the East Nusa Tenggara provincial capital Kupang by Wednesday. There are still more than 1,000 Indonesians in the country.  
(‘Many Indonesians refuse to leave Dili: Indonesian diplomat’ 2006, *Xinhua News Agency*, 1 June – Attachment 1)

However there is information to indicate that some of the groups involved in the attacks were pro-Indonesian:

These tensions, some observers say, date back to East Timor's occupation by Indonesia in 1975. Many in the west were perceived as having sympathised with their colonial masters in Jakarta, while the east favoured independence.

Others are less sure of the origins of the current unrest.

"There is still a question as to what extent this (division) really exists," says New Zealand Ambassador Ruth Nuttall, who arrived in Dili in December last year and has now found herself working 20-hour days to keep Helen Clark's Government in Wellington abreast of increasingly confusing developments in a nation where nearly 200 Kiwi troops have been sent.

...

Amid the chaos, some are using the mayhem to settle old scores. Other attacks appear more orchestrated. With the army and police largely confined to their barracks and monitored by foreign troops, and rebel elements remaining in the hills, people have begun speaking of a "third element" stirring trouble. The problem is that nobody seems to know who that is.

(Eaton, Dan 2006 'Tools of terror', *The Press*, 3 June – Attachment 2)

## **2. Please provide information on the general security situation in Dili.**

### **3. Please provide information on the current state of law enforcement in Dili.**

There is indication that the authorities did not foresee the possibility of severe civil disruption:

Despite the winding down of the UN presence in country, the institutions comprising East Timor's armed forces (F-FDTL) and police (PNTL) remained fragile and the authority of the state much more tenuous than most observers assumed at the time.

...

On April 28, the protests turned violent. Citing ineffective police response, the government called in the armed forces (F-FDTL) to respond.

...

In the aftermath of these clashes, which effectively caused the dissolution of law and order, mob and gang violence took over the capital, resulting in additional deaths, widespread destruction of property, and the continued displacement of thousands of Dili residents. At the peak of the crisis, approximately 80,000 IDPs were in the districts and approximately 70,000 were residing in camps within Dili.

...

Although security in Dili has been significantly improved in comparison to the violence and anarchy that reigned in May and June, neither the establishment of a new government nor the expansion of the UN mission has reduced the levels of violence and criminality to their pre-April 2006 levels. Indeed, in October, shortly after the UN Special Commission of Inquiry issued its report on responsibility for the security crisis of April-June, Dili experienced a surge of violence that led to several deaths and the closure of the international airport for a day. While the overwhelming majority of the current violence is Timorese-on-Timorese perpetrated by gangs or martial arts groups, foreign nationals have also been targeted. Differences between Loro Sae and Loro Monu have recently subsided and been overtaken by long-standing conflicts between members of competing groups, including martial arts groups and semi-religious sects.

...

Police functions in Dili are currently under UN control, while members of the PNTL are being gradually reintegrated into city policing following vetting for criminal or ethical violations. UN officials and other observers expect the reform of the country's security sector to be a long-term challenge.

('State Department issues background note on East Timor' 2006, *Hindustan Times*, 1 December – Attachment 3)

#### **4. Please provide information on treatment of East Timorese in Indonesia.**

According to an Indonesian source reporting on the situation of East Timorese refugees who fled to Maluku after the 1999 referendum in East Timor, the Indonesian government is not treating all East Timorese equitably and

has not given the same treatment to those who fled to Maluku as compared to East Timorese refugees living in other regions like East Nusa Tenggara, Inuhan, the chairman of the Ambon chapter of the East Timorese political victims commission said.

“We feel sidelined and neglected by the Maluku provincial administration and the central government,” Inuhan said.

Inuhan’s complaint was acknowledged by Maluku Governor Karel Albert Ralahalu, who proposed that the central government set aside funds for the East Timorese refugees, many of whose ancestors are from Maluku, who have been neglected especially after violence broke out in Maluku in 1999.

(Former East Timorese refugees in Maluku neglected by govt, 2006 Internet site: *The Jakarta Post*, [www.thejakartapost.com](http://www.thejakartapost.com), 4 May – Attachment 4)

#### **5. Please provide information on the treatment of East Timorese supporters in Indonesia.**

According to a briefing prepared by the *International Crisis Group*, pro-Indonesia East Timorese who have taken residence in West Timor are no longer held in high regard by the Indonesian authorities:

##### **A. FORMER MILITIA**

Of the four groups of ex-refugees, it is the former militia whose presence near the border is often considered selfevidently sinister, but their position in West Timor is weak. Like others who came in 1999, they periodically cross illegally into Timor-Leste, and some have been involved in recent border violence. However, it is important not to make the conceptual leap, as some observers have done, between their involvement in these incidents and a continuation of the 1999 campaign of violence. They are not politically united, they lack at least the public support of the Indonesian military and police and they are certainly not receiving logistical aid. They are not an organised threat to Timor-Leste, and they are acutely conscious of the international scrutiny of their every move. Militia leaders from 1999 are generally well off, but many of their followers are now farmers, drive motorcycle taxis or have no regular job. While they may ridicule independent Timor-Leste, many say they would return if granted a general amnesty.

...

By mid-December, registration had started in both districts where most former militia live as well as in at least two camps in Kupang district.<sup>22</sup> In mid-February 2006, Guterres stated that around 10,000 had registered throughout Indonesia, approximately 8,000 of them in West Timor.

He said the data would be submitted to the government via the Indonesian parliament (DPR) in March 2006 – this timetable has since been delayed until at least July 2006.

The forms could be a double-edged sword for former militia. While they provide detailed information for anyone wanting to consolidate members into a new organisation, they could be a valuable resource for human rights campaigners if leaked or made public. If no government assistance is forthcoming, they could diminish the standing of the militia leaders involved in the registration. Most ex- refugees have already been registered several times by different groups, and the issue of “selling their names” is sensitive.

...

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Guterres’s initiative is that he needed to conduct a registration at all to lobby the Indonesian government, another indication that the latter no longer sponsors or supports the former militia.

(‘Managing Tensions on the Timor-Lest e/Indonesia Border 2006, International Crisis Group, Policy Briefing No. 50, 4 May –

[http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/south\\_east\\_asia/120\\_resolving\\_timor\\_lest\\_es\\_crisis.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/south_east_asia/120_resolving_timor_lest_es_crisis.pdf) – Attachment 5)

## **List of Sources Consulted**

### Internet Sources:

#### **Government Information & Reports**

UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>

#### **United Nations (UN)**

United Nations <http://www.un.org/>

UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.ch/>

UNHCHR <http://www.ohcr.org>

#### **Non-Government Organisations**

International Crisis Group <http://www.crisisweb.org/>

#### **International News & Politics**

*BBC News* <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

#### **Search Engines**

Google <http://www.google.com.au/>

Copernic <http://www.copernic.com/>

### Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

## **List of Attachments**

1. ‘Many Indonesians refuse to leave Dili: Indonesian diplomat’ 2006, *Xinhua News Agency*, 1 June. (FACTIVA)
2. Eaton, Dan 2006 ‘Tools of terror’, *The Press*, 3 June. (FACTIVA)
3. “State Department issues background note on East Timor’ 2006, *Hindustan Times*, 1 December. (FACTIVA)
4. ‘Former East Timorese refugees in Maluku neglected by govt’, 2006 Internet site: *The Jakarta Post*, [www.thejakartapost.com](http://www.thejakartapost.com), 4 May. (CISNET Indonesia/East Timor CX152598)

5. 'Managing Tensions on the Timor-Leste/Indonesia Border 2006, International Crisis Group, Policy Briefing No. 50, 4 May – [http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/south\\_east\\_asia/120\\_resolving\\_timor\\_lestes\\_crisis.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/south_east_asia/120_resolving_timor_lestes_crisis.pdf) . (Accessed 11 October 2006)