

Translated from Tetum original

La'ó Hamutuk

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Dili, 05 July 2021

To: President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

Cc: RDTL Mission to the United Nations, media and public

Re: Timor-Leste should support democracy and human rights in Myanmar

With respect,

La'ó Hamutuk, as a civil society organization which defends democracy, human rights, and solidarity in Timor-Leste and across the globe, was saddened to see that Timor-Leste lacked the courage to vote in favor of Resolution 75/287 which was approved by the UN General Assembly on 18 June by a vote of 119 to 1. Only 36 countries, including Timor-Leste, abstained from this vote. This resolution condemns the military coup in Myanmar and asks all nations not to provide arms to that military regime. We ask the state of Timor-Leste to inform the UN that this abstention does not follow our Government's intention. A letter like this will inform the international community and the dictatorship in Myanmar that Timor-Leste continues to follow our principles.

Timor-Leste as a democratic country under rule of law has a significant responsibility to support human rights, democracy, and the freedom of all people. Our historic struggle for independence is inseparable from the solidarity it received from the international community, which showed their solidarity with the Timorese people's struggle to free ourselves from the Indonesian military dictatorship.

The report of the Commission on Truth, Reception and Reconciliation (CAVR), *Chega!*, includes recommendations to the entire international community to actively promote human rights and democracy. We are glad that this report has been submitted to the United Nations, large countries, and international organizations to continue to promote and protect human rights and democracy. Timor-Leste, too, should not easily forget the heavy suffering we received from the Indonesian military during 24 years of illegal occupation.

Today, Timor-Leste enjoys independence but we should not forget the support we sought, and often received, during our long struggle. By abstaining from the UN resolution, the state of Timor-Leste failed to defend democracy and human rights, while implicitly defending the illegal acts which continue in Myanmar. We believe that Timor-Leste must not sacrifice our constitution, treaties we have ratified, and the principles of democracy and rule of law because we are waiting for consensus within ASEAN, or to follow China's wishes.

In 1975-1999, every ASEAN government supported Indonesia's occupation of Timor-Leste, but today things have changed. Some ASEAN members, including Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam and Malaysia, voted for this resolution. And the ambassador from Myanmar itself voted for it, because he does not recognize the legitimacy of the military regime which seized power last February.

As everyone knows, the conflict in Myanmar is against its people and their democratic system; activists, women, children and vulnerable people suffered for many years from military dictatorship in that country.

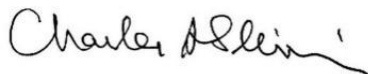
Therefore, La'o Hamutuk was deeply saddened to see Timor-Leste's abstention during the UN debate on the current political situation and human rights in Myanmar. We believe that, in reality, Timor-Leste should be an example and a pioneer in the struggle for self-determination, democracy and human rights; an opportunity unfortunately lost in this important vote. We ask Your Excellencies to explain to our people and to the international community why Timor-Leste decided to abstain, and how Timor-Leste will follow a better path in the future.

Finally, we encourage political leaders to carefully weigh the facts, including the consequences, before deciding how to vote on UN resolutions in the future, because these decisions represent Timor-Leste to the world. We ask that decisions like this not be repeated, due to ambitions or interventions from outside.

Sincerely,



Marta da Silva



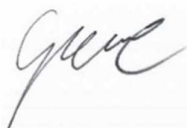
Charles Scheiner



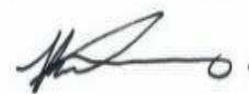
Mariano Ferreira



Celestino Gusmão



Elizaria Febe Gomes



Bree Ahrens