



Press Releases:

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Timor-Leste: Parliament's Delay on Draft Laws Denies Justice

DILI/NEW YORK, Oct. 1—Victims' groups have reacted with disappointment and anger to the decision of the Timor-Leste parliament to postpone debate on two pivotal justice laws.

Parliament decided on September 29 to delay until February 2011 the debate of two draft laws implementing key recommendations made by the country's two truth commissions: the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) and the Commission for Truth and Friendship (CTF).

Victims' groups have stated the delay reflects the unwillingness of some parliamentarians to take victims' rights seriously.

"This long parliamentary process began in June 2008, but parliament remains divided. Repeatedly postponing debate over these laws ignores victims' suffering and undermines hopes for the future," said Manuela Pereira, ICTJ Program Associate.

The draft laws propose the creation of a national reparations program and the establishment of an "Institute for Memory" to oversee implementation of CTF and CAVR recommendations. The recommendations include important steps on victim reparations, the search for persons missing as a result of the conflict, human rights documentation and education.

"Timorese civilians suffered serious human rights violations during the 1974–1999 conflict, and continue to suffer the effects of these violations today. Ten years after the conflict has ended, victims remain vulnerable and without means to heal the wounds of the past," said Pereira. "Victims have waited too long for the recognition and assistance that they deserve."

Background

Created in 2001, the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) was mandated to investigate human rights violations committed in Timor-Leste during the 25-year armed conflict, help restore the dignity of victims and promote reconciliation and reintegration of perpetrators of minor

crimes back into their communities.

In its final report CAVR made over 200 recommendations on reforms and initiatives intended to prevent a repetition of human rights abuses in Timor-Leste. These included bringing perpetrators of serious crimes to justice and a range of measures aimed at creating strong, accountable state institutions.

The Commission on Truth and Friendship (CTF) was a bilateral Indonesian-Timor-Leste commission established to determine “the conclusive truth” regarding the violence before and after the 1999 independence vote in Timor-Leste. Created in 2005, it was originally criticized by local civil society organizations and the United Nations for its power to recommend amnesties. However, the commission declined to use its amnesty power and made recommendations largely consistent with those of the CAVR.

The president of Timor-Leste presented to parliament the CAVR final report and recommendations for consideration on November 28, 2005, and the CTF report on October 9, 2008.

In December 2009, after several failed attempts to debate the reports, parliament authorized its committee for justice and constitutional issues to propose concrete steps to implement CAVR and CTF recommendations. In response, the Committee prepared two draft laws, originally scheduled for debate in late September 2010, but delayed for debate until February 2011.

About ICTJ

The International Center for Transitional Justice works to redress and prevent the most severe violations of human rights by confronting legacies of mass abuse. ICTJ seeks holistic solutions to promote accountability and create just and peaceful societies. For more information, visit www.ictj.org.

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