



Rede Defensor Direitos Umanus (RDDU)

Rua: Faról, Dili Karaketu, Timor-Leste

Telephone: (+670) 77345564 / 7759596

PRESS RELEASE

RDDU is concerned about statements by the Chief of Timor-Leste's Defence Force which endanger future rule of law in Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste's Human Rights Defenders Network-*Rede Defensor Direitos Umanus* (RDDU) asks everyone, and especially the leaders of the State who set an example for the people, to uphold highly and promote the principles and values of human rights, justice and democracy.

In the process of liberating the nation, human rights were the fundamental basis for the struggle and defense of the people of Timor-Leste. Eventually, we achieved our right to self-determination and ended the suffering of the people from the illegal Indonesian military occupation.

Everyone, including the leaders, is proud that the Constitution of our Republic is among the best in the world, as it strongly guarantees human rights equally for all. In addition, the State has ratified seven human rights treaties. Thus, we ask the leaders of the State to show their commitment to human rights according to the promises set out in the law.

The Human Rights Defenders Network-*Rede Defensor Direitos Umanus* is concerned with the following public statements:

1. By the Chief of Timor-Leste Defence Force who, according to public information on 21 December 2016, released a statement to encourage the security forces during the Christmas and New Year season to use excessive force and shoot to break the legs of those who commit crimes and run away. Based on the information reported, the Chief of Defence Force noted "don't be afraid about human rights".¹

The Human Rights Defenders Network-*Rede Defensor Direitos Umanus* asks the security forces to act according to the law and with respect for human rights, and only to use force if necessary and proportionally. RDDU also uses this opportunity to express that we condemn criminal acts by some youth which do not contribute to stability, and impact negatively on people's liberty and security. Everyone, including young people, has rights, but there is also the duty to respect the rights of others.

2. By the Chief of Timor-Leste Defence Force reportedly made on 1 December 2016 and reported in the media, that he will not give opportunities or promotions to children of militia who are in the F-FDTL.²

¹ *Jornál Timor-Post*, 24 Dezembro 2016 no Radio Televizaun Timor-Leste, 21 Dezembro 2016

² *Jornál Timor-Post*, 2 Dezembro 2016

We as human rights defenders continue to demand accountability for human rights violations that occurred during the struggle for independence, including by the militia. But children are not responsible for the acts of their parents who they were militia at in that time. RDDU considers that the statement of the Chief of Defence Force could result in discrimination and this is against our Constitution and international conventions which the State has ratified.

Therefore, RDDU asks:

1. State leaders not to issue words which contradict the principles and values of human rights.
2. Security forces to perform their duties according to the law, and only use force which is based on law and is proportional.
3. The F-FDTL commander to provide equal opportunities to F-FDTL members regardless of their parents' histories.

RDDU, composed of NGOs working in the area of human rights, thanks you for your attention.

Members of the Human Rights Defenders Network:

1. Asosiasaun HAK
2. ALFeLa
3. AJAR
4. ACbit
5. Codiva
6. Fundasaun Mahein
7. AHMDTL (Asosiasaun Halibur Matan Defisiénsia Timor-Leste)
8. Belun
9. JSMP
10. La'ó Hamutuk
11. NGO Community Based Rehabilitation

Dili, 16 February 2017

Coordinator RDDU

Signed

(Jose Maria Moniz)