

La'ò Hamutuk

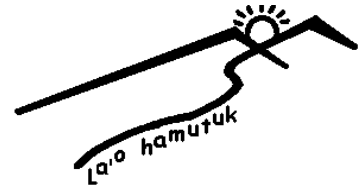
Timor-Leste Institute for Development Monitoring & Analysis

Rua Dom Alberto Ricardo, Bebora, Dili, Timor-Leste

Tel : +670 332 1040

Email: laohamutuk@gmail.com

Website: www.laohamutuk.org



25 July 2023

Mr. Ishtiaq Ghafoor, Foreign and Security Policy Political Counsellor
Embassy of the United Kingdom to Timor-Leste and Indonesia
Jakarta, Indonesia

Re: New visa requirement for Timor-Leste citizens to visit the United Kingdom

Dear Mr. Ghafoor,

I enjoyed talking with you a few weeks ago, and hope you found our conversation useful. It was good to hear that the U.K. is moving toward closer, stronger ties with Timor-Leste, and plans to open an embassy in Dili in a year or two.

Therefore, I (and many other people) was surprised to hear last week's announcement of new visa requirements for Timor-Leste citizens who want to visit the U.K.

I understand that people have to apply and pay online, and then visit Bali or Jakarta to complete their application. Most Timorese do not have internationally accepted credit cards or bank accounts, so online payments are problematic. Travel to Indonesia is expensive and time-consuming; there appears to be a £55 surcharge (more than two weeks' pay for many workers) for processing in Bali. These requirements are onerous and are contrary to strengthening UK-TL ties, notwithstanding the Home Secretary's assertion that the move is "not a sign of poor relations."

The Home Secretary said that the new rule comes from a desire to prevent "non-genuine visitors." Wouldn't it be better and fairer to take action against the few visitors who abuse the system, rather than engaging in collective punishment against all Timor-Leste citizens, most of whom are indeed "genuine"? Today's *Guardian*¹ underscores the damage inflicted by the new policy.

Thank you very much for your attention and concern, and please forward this letter to the appropriate people.

Sincerely,

Charles Scheiner, La'ò Hamutuk

Cc: Tracey Morgan, Anita Munafia, Rizky Kurniawan

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/jul/25/uk-accused-of-unlawful-crackdown-on-visitors-from-timor-leste>