

La'o Hamutuk

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OPEN LETTER

DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE PEOPLE OF MYANMAR

La'o Hamutuk, as an independent civil society organization working on public policy analysis, democratic governance and human rights, contributes this open letter to the public discussion of the current legal investigation by the Public Prosecutor's Office of Timor-Leste on allegations of serious international crimes against the people of Myanmar.

Through this letter, La'o Hamutuk expresses our view that justice must prevail, free from political pressure, and that human dignity must be the main reference in international relations including in Timor-Leste, Myanmar, ASEAN and the rest of the world. La'o Hamutuk encourages the Public Prosecutor's Office to continue to carry out fully independent investigations, analysis and legal verification, in accordance with Articles 8.1, 9.2, 119 and 132 of the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, national law and international legal principles. A criminal investigation is the first step to assess if there is sufficient legal basis to proceed. This process is neither a criminal judicial trial nor a political decision.

Therefore, we call on all political authorities to respect the separation of powers and avoid statements that could be interpreted as attempts to direct or limit the judicial process. As a civil society organization that supports human rights and democracy, La'o Hamutuk highly appreciates the Myanmar Accountability Project (MAP) and Da Silva Teixeira & Associates for bringing cases of human rights violations against the Chin people in Myanmar to the Public Prosecutor's Office of Timor-Leste. Unfortunately, human rights violations have occurred for many years in Myanmar and have become a global concern, but so far there has been no concrete international action to stop the continuing military dictatorship.

Rule of law and institutional independence

The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste guarantees the autonomy of the Public Prosecutor's Office and the independence of the courts as fundamental pillars of the democratic rule of law. This principle is not only a legal structure but must be the environment to ensure that the law is applied impartially, equally and with legal certainty.

When political powers encourage public opinion to guide judicial decisions, even if there is no direct intent to influence, it can create the perception of interference. Therefore, prudence in public communication is essential to protect the credibility of the Court and the Public Prosecutor.

The State of Timor-Leste is itself committed to the principle of democratic rule of law, including strengthening international solidarity, which is clearly stated in Article 10 of the

RDTL Constitution: Timor-Leste will be in solidarity with all people who fight for national liberation. The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste grants political asylum, in accordance with the law, to foreigners persecuted for their struggle for national and social liberation, defense of human rights, democracy and peace. These legal principles have been adopted on the basis of a historic victory over oppression, which the people of Timor-Leste themselves have experienced.

National law and international law

The Criminal Code of Timor-Leste defines crimes against humanity and war crimes as serious violations that affect all humanity. These norms align with international legal standards that prohibit human rights violations, combining International Human Rights Law (IHRL) which protects individuals from state abuses, and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) which regulates armed conflict. They include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Rome Statute and the Geneva Convention which mandate humane treatment, prohibit torture, and mandate accountability for violations, with obligations on states to protect individuals and prosecute abuses. At the same time, international law recognizes the principle of universal jurisdiction, which allows the State to assess allegations of serious crimes when appropriate, to prevent impunity. Therefore, the opening of a preliminary investigation by the Timor-Leste prosecutor is a normal legal step to verify evidence, not a trial or diplomatic interference.

Solidarity with victims and responsible diplomacy

La'o Hamutuk reaffirms our solidarity with the people of Myanmar, especially civilian victims of serious human rights violations. This solidarity is not against the sovereignty of any State; Solidarity is an act to protect human dignity, and is a universal value recognized in international law and in relations between nations.

Fifty years ago, the military dictatorship in Jakarta violated international principles and the human rights of the Timorese people during their illegal occupation. ASEAN states remained silent, and the Indonesian military killed and tortured many of our people. We cannot sit by while such crimes against humanity happen again. The State of RDTL and all states have an obligation to use legal and diplomatic mechanisms to defend the human rights of the people of Myanmar.

Sustainable international relations depend on mutual respect for human dignity and the law. When states show their commitment to universal norms and accountability, the international community can develop cooperation based on trust, stability and responsibility.

La'o Hamutuk encourages:

1. **The Public Prosecutor's Office to continue to make independent assessments in accordance with the law and evidence:** The investigation process should be autonomous and professional, in accordance with applicable legal procedures and standards of proof. Preliminary assessment is a normal step to determine whether there is sufficient legal basis to proceed to the next steps and is important to protect the rights of victims and suspects impartially.

2. **Political authorities must respect the separation of powers and avoid influencing judicial processes:** Public statements need to be made with caution so as not to create a negative perception of a case. Respect the separation of powers between the executive and judicial branches to strengthen public confidence and protect the credibility of the rule of law.
3. **The international community promotes civil protection and peaceful solutions:** International cooperation should be oriented towards preventing violence, protecting the civilian population and promoting constructive dialogue.
4. **The State of the RDTL and the rest of the world, including ASEAN members, must defend democracy and human rights in Myanmar through diplomatic and legal processes.**

Conclusion

Timor-Leste, as a nation living with the memory of struggle for justice and dignity, has a moral and legal responsibility to defend the universal principle of human rights in international relations. Our historical experience shows that sustainable peace depends on respect for the law and accountability.

Independent justice is not against diplomacy; independent justice is the foundation of credible diplomacy because it shows that a state respects rules and responsibilities. Accountability is not revenge; accountability is a mechanism to ensure that serious violations are not repeated and that human suffering is recognized and responded to in accordance with the law.

Sustainable international relations depend on mutual respect for human dignity and the law. When States demonstrate a commitment to universal norms and accountability, the international community can develop cooperation based on trust, stability and accountability.

Respectfully,



Marta da Silva



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