



# EAST TIMOR REPORT

Issued by the East Timor Sub-committee of the Australian Council  
for Overseas Aid

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## UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION DEFENDS EAST TIMORESE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION.

On 16 February 1983, the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva passed a resolution in favour of East Timorese self-determination. The resolution read:

### The Commission on Human Rights,

1. Reaffirms the inalienable right of the people of East Timor to self-determination, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV);
2. Declares that the people of East Timor must be enabled freely to determine their own future on the basis of the relevant United Nations human rights instruments;
3. Calls upon all interested parties, namely Portugal, as the administering Power, and the representatives of the East Timorese people, as well as Indonesia, to co-operate fully with the United Nations with a view to guaranteeing the free and full exercise of the right to self-determination by the people of East Timor;
4. Expresses its deepest concern at the suffering of the people of East Timor as a result of the situation now prevailing in the Territory;
5. Calls upon all parties concerned to facilitate the entry into the territory of international aid to alleviate the suffering of the people of East Timor.

Sixteen countries voted for the resolution and fourteen, including the Australian (Lib/NCP) Government, voted against. Ten countries abstained and three were absent:

FOR: Brazil, China, Cuba, Cyprus, Ghana, Republic of Ireland, Lybia, Mexico, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Togo, Uganda, Ukrainian S.S.R., U.S.S.R., Tanzania, Zimbabwe;

AGAINST: Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Columbia, Fiji, Gambia, India, Japan, Jordan, Pakistan, Phillipines, U.S.A., Uruguay;

ABSTAINING: Finland, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Holland, Poland, Ruanda, Senegal, Britain, Yugoslavia.

According to news reports, Portugal and Indonesia, while not currently members of the Commission, were "lobbying furiously" before the vote was taken (*International Herald Tribune*, 15 Feb. 1983).

Non-government organisations addressed the Commission. They included Pax Romana, (the Geneva based International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs) and Pax Christi International.

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#### NOTES

1. This resolution is especially significant because it clearly identifies self-determination as a principal 'human right' of the East Timorese.
2. Reports of strong Portuguese Government lobbying at the Commission suggest that Lisbon is continuing with its diplomatic activities (belatedly) launched at the United Nations in late 1982.
3. The narrow margin and high abstention vote shown at the United Nations General Assembly last year appears to be continuing - and holding in favour of the East Timorese.
4. With the notable exception of Ireland, European countries are continuing to abstain on the issue.

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*EAST TIMOR REPORT* is issued to keep you informed on important but little-known developments concerning East Timor. Please circulate it to appropriate sections of your organisation, to concerned colleagues, friends etc..

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