



EAST TIMOR REPORT

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Jakarta's new offensive

East Timor, population 550,000, is currently undergoing its fourth major military offensive by Indonesia in 8 years.

The first, the initial invasion of 75-6, involved heavy loss of life and left Indonesia in control of the main population centres and Fretilin at large in the mountainous interior. The second, in 1977-8, saw fresh tactics employed by the new Indonesian armed forces chief, General Jusuf, and resulted in significant Indonesian victories including the killing of the Fretilin leader, Nicolau Lobato, and the onset of a famine so severe that International Red Cross described it as being as "bad as that in Biafra". The third, in 1981, best-known as the 'fence of legs' operation, stretched over several months and involved the conscription of 50,000 Timorese in an attempt to encircle Fretilin. A public relations disaster both within East Timor and abroad, it failed to achieve its military objective though some Fretilin were killed and many of their supporters were shipped off to the now infamous detention centre of Atauro island as part of a broader Indonesian drive to isolate Fretilin from the population.

At least 100,000 Timorese have died from these campaigns, other actions and related causes — "more deaths than any current war except Kampuchea", according to the *Centre for Defense Information* in Washington.

Change of heart in Jakarta

Jakarta decided on the current drive when it became clear that a ceasefire agreed to in March was being successfully exploited by Fretilin both to extend its network inside Timor and to make political capital abroad. Widely-publicised photographs of the Fretilin guerilla leader, Jose Gusmao (Xanana), holding talks with his Indonesian counterpart Colonel Purwanto — to give only one example — proved enormously embarrassing to Indonesia which for years had maintained Fretilin was a spent force.

In July, the hawkish new chief of the Indonesian armed forces, General Benny Murdani, visited East Timor with four top-level Defence Department officers, ostensibly for the Moslem Lebaran festival. Murdani and Purwanto both urged Fretilin to surrender. It was at this time, according to sources in Jakarta quoted by AFP in a despatch in September, that "Indonesian leaders . . . decided . . . to set a deadline for the surrender of the guerillas". A series of incidents in early August in the

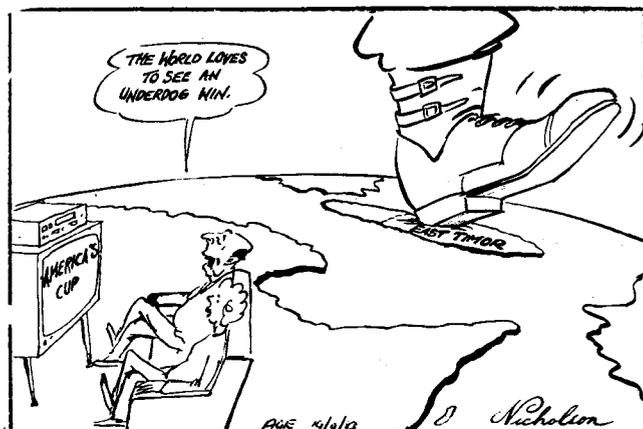
Viqueque area hardened and maybe hastened the Army's resolve to move against Fretilin militarily. On August 8, ex-Fretilin villagers killed 16 Indonesian soldiers and carried off their weapons and ammunition, to be followed two days later by some 86 Hansip (Timorese civil guards working with the Indonesian armed forces). In retaliation for the killing, Indonesian troops killed 200 villagers in the area, according to Catholic Church sources.

On August 16, General Murdani informed the Jakarta press that if Fretilin did not surrender he would "hit them without mercy" using "all Indonesia's arsenal".

A military build-up began immediately. Refugees interviewed in Lisbon in September told how, from mid-August, Hercules transports and ships began arriving in Dili carrying troops and equipment to be transported overland to all parts of the territory in trucks requisitioned from Chinese merchants. They also reported parachute drops near Laga, Lospalos, Baucau and Viqueque in the eastern zone.

At the end of August, Col. Rudito, a soldier with field experience known in the army as an expert tactician and hardliner, replaced Col. Purwanto as head of the Indonesian army in Timor, marking the official abandonment of the 'hearts and minds' approach in favour of military force. Purwanto (recommended by Bill Morrison, the leader of the recent Australian Parliamentary visit to East Timor, as a future 'Professor of Psychology' — a rather unfortunate accolade given the Colonel's blatant misreading of Fretilin's state of *minuj*) was recalled to Jakarta.

Aware of the rapidly deteriorating situation, the Australian Government announced on September 1 that it was officially conveying its concern to the Indonesian Government "over reports that a new



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continued

build-up of Indonesian troops and military equipment was taking place in East Timor and that this was being accompanied by civilian arrests". The statement, issued by the Foreign Minister, Bill Hayden, further declared that "any resumption of hostilities can only add to the human misery and suffering in East Timor and would represent a step backwards in the search for a lasting peace".

Reliable statistics on the balance of military power and detail on the actual fighting are hard to come by. The Indonesian press is strictly controlled, AFP and AAP correspondents in Jakarta tell of heavy security and military bans on unauthorised phone calls to East Timor, the ICRC has been effectively banned from the main island since July, and no foreigners have been permitted access since the Australian Parliamentary Delegation's visit at the end of July early August.

However, drawing on a variety of sources, the following picture emerges.

A new offensive

Jakarta has boosted the number of military personnel in East Timor to 10,000, over half of whom are engaged in the offensive directed, in the main, at Fretilin strongholds in the eastern sector and the capture or killing of the Fretilin leader, Jose Gusmao. Additional helicopters, AMX tanks, and some fixed wing aircraft (A4 ground-attack Skyhawks, of which Indonesia has two squadrons and OV-10 counter-insurgency Broncos – of which Indonesia has fifteen) have also been moved in.

There have been unconfirmed reports of Fretilin attacks on the Dili military airport and on a commando unit in Dili, resulting, according to a Catholic priest, in door to door searches in the capital and a marked rise in the level of tension. Arrests have been made. An Indonesian foreign affairs official informed the Australian Government on September 20 that 90 Hansips (Timorese civil guards) "whose loyalty was suspect" were recently moved onto Atauro island taking the number of detainees there to an estimated 2,100. There have also been unconfirmed reports that a range of incendiary, cluster and anti-personnel bombs are being dropped on Fretilin positions by Indonesian Skyhawks flying four missions a day from Baucau airport.

The Catholic Church in East Timor conservatively estimates the number of Fretilin guerillas at 1,200, excluding supporters and relatives. Any estimate of Fretilin strength and durability, however, must also take into account the extensive clandestine network established by Fretilin in Indonesian-controlled centres since 1978. The existence of this network is confirmed in detail in the pages of an Indonesian army manual captured by Fretilin late in 1982 and authenticated by Amnesty International. The

manual provides some credibility to Fretilin claims that "Fretilin is the people and the people are Fretilin".

Mario Carrascalao, the Governor of East Timor, who has survived in office despite his advocacy of the now discredited 'hearts and minds' strategy, is now firmly committed to the offensive. "The only solution is a military solution", he told APF in Jakarta on October 17, adding that the campaign should succeed "within months".

At the United Nations, as a first step, the Governments of Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Sao Tome and Principe, have sought to alert the Security Council to the offensive by having a letter from Fretilin circulated. The letter summarises the situation and calls on the Council "to take immediate steps provided for in the Charter" and recalls "that Security Council resolutions 384 (1975) and 389 (1976), calling upon the Government of Indonesia to withdraw all its forces from East Timor 'without delay', have not been complied with by Indonesia".

The fact of the offensive and its seriousness have not generally registered in Australia. According to one Parliamentary observer in Canberra there has not been a single question on the issue in the House of Representatives since reports of the offensive began circulating three months ago.

Red Cross aid blocked at critical time

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been significantly restricted in its East Timor operation since July this year. These restrictions occur at a time when ICRC is most needed in East Timor – that is during the current Indonesian military offensive on the mainland.

Despite some semantic denials by Foreign Affairs Minister Hayden, it is clear from ICRC documents and internal Australian Government material (see *The Age*, October 18-20) that ICRC is presently unable to visit any prisons or assess requirements for humanitarian aid on mainland East Timor. The Dili-based tracing and family reunion program and the food and medical program for detainees on Atauro island remain intact – though there have been difficulties on Atauro.

Humanitarian aid

According to its Situation Report No.10 (September 1983), ICRC decided in July to suspend its participation in food and medical assistance activities because it was "unable to apply usual ICRC criteria". Specifically, ICRC delegates could not get permission to visit villages for evaluation of aid requirements. Two months of "very difficult" negotiations between ICRC and Jakarta have failed to alter the restrictions.

The 1983 ICRC program which cannot be implemented included:

- Urgent food distribution to several localities on the main island.
- Continued evaluation to keep authorities informed of problems and to cover possible emergency needs.

Timor prelate visits Australia

The former head of the Catholic Church in East Timor, Mgr Martinho da Costa Lopes, recently visited Australia for four weeks, September 27 – October 26, as the guest of Christians in Solidarity with East Timor.

Mgr Lopes, 64 years old and indigenous East Timorese, was Apostolic Administrator of the East Timorese Catholic Church until his resignation in April this year. 47% of East Timorese are Catholic though many more declared themselves Catholic for the purposes of the Indonesian census of 1980.

He visited Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney, Darwin, and Perth meeting with Parliamentarians, some Bishops, the Timorese community, and laity and clergy of various denominations, before travelling on to five Pacific countries and North America.



will go on and the issue will continue to trouble Australian-Indonesian relations for as long as natural justice is denied to the East Timorese people. Some say we should stop fighting. But we know that according to the UN Charter and international law we have the right, like all people, to justice and freedom. If Japan had occupied Australia would Australians not have resisted?"

► Isolation from the international Church

After expressing appreciation for the material aid given by the Indonesian and international Church, the Mgr commented:

"During 8 years I received only one letter of support. It came from the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission in Paris, written in French. One letter only during 8 years, but it was good for us because this letter gave us comfort in our suffering, to understand and be in solidarity with our suffering there . . . so the priests were very, very happy about it".

► On speaking out

"At first I agreed with those who say we should keep quiet and until 1981 I was silent. I complained privately to General Dading about human rights abuses, and to the local commander. But nothing changed. In 1981, after 6 years, I decided that because there were no other means I should speak openly in accordance with the Church's prophetic mission. At a rally of 12,000 people in honour of Our Lady I condemned the abuses, without naming Indonesia. That was the first time I spoke out publicly".

► On Peace

"Only a genuine, completely free act of self-determination will bring peace to East Timor. Australia must understand that the fighting

► On Material Development In East Timor

"I agree Indonesia is spending much money there - building some houses, some roads, material things. But these are no substitute for our rights. Material progress is empty without justice and freedom".

► On Fretilin

"Fretilin is fighting for an ideal. For freedom, justice and independence. They are the symbol of national resistance and have the support of the people until we get our independence like other small Pacific islands. Xanana says Fretilin is the people and the people is Fretilin. It's true".

- Distribution of food parcels to detainees on Atauro returning to their villages and later monitoring their condition and distributing relief supplies in case of urgent need.

The ICRC surveys also found distribution problems in Luro and Iliomar due to unspecified "logistical difficulties". In Iliomar, these difficulties had caused a deterioration in the food situation. ICRC also found that 600 people moved from Atauro to Cailaco were not self-sufficient in food.

At the end of April 1983, the ICRC team was reinforced by a relief delegate to monitor distribution, evaluate needs and help resolve logistical problems. This delegate was recalled to Geneva when the relief program had to be suspended.

Prisoner protection

While traditional ICRC activities include prison visitation ('protection'), Red Cross was not permitted by Jakarta to do this until 1982 when it visited Atauro and Comarca prison in Dili in February of

that year. The report of the Australian Parliamentary delegation to East Timor implied that ICRC had regular access to Comarca when in fact the prison has only been visited twice – the last time being in November 1982. At that time ICRC was also able to make one visit to a second mainland prison. This was a *Kodim* (army) prison in Lospalos holding 12 Timorese. No mainland prisons have been visited by ICRC since then.

In January 1983 a senior ICRC representative, Jean-Pierre Hocke was assured by Jakarta that ICRC would be permitted to visit other detention centres outside Dili from June 1983. However Situation Report No.10 revealed that Jakarta later requested ICRC to defer the visits until November or December 1983.

ICRC has for the first time stated publicly that it requires access to *all* centres. It has rejected a proposal to accept an 'in principle' agreement for access to all centres but which would be implemented gradually. ICRC-Geneva is reportedly doubtful that Jakarta would 'carry through' such an agreement.

It is a matter for speculation as to how many prisons do exist in East Timor. Refugees have claimed that all 13 administrative districts can have up to three official detention centres and also report the use of unofficial 'holding houses'. There have also been frequent claims of the use of nearby islands for political prisoners – including Jaco, Liran and Alor and very recently, Bali. ICRC documents do not specify other centres, but do confirm the existence of places other than the well known Atauro and Comarca.

Atauro

Since being permitted to visit Atauro in February 1982, ICRC has supervised a major food and medical program on the island. While described as "displaced persons" in ICRC reports, the Australian Parliamentary delegation saw them as "detainees without trial".

Unable to grow enough food to be self-sufficient, the Atauro detainees have been dependent on food aid for survival. Despite some decrease in the Atauro population with the return of some detainees to the mainland, there have clearly been problems because in late April 1983 an ICRC nurse/nutritionist was despatched to Timor to take part in the Atauro program.

While the Red Cross program on Atauro is able to continue, the presence of the ICRC nurse has recently been under threat. In late September the Australian embassy in Jakarta was advised by an Indonesian official that the Indonesian military commander in East Timor was preventing the nurse from visiting Atauro and that he wanted her removed from East Timor altogether "because she was too active and talked too much". As far as we are aware, this removal has not actually occurred.

The Australian Parliamentary delegation reported that Indonesian authorities "hoped" to move all Atauro detainees back to the mainland by October. This was certainly a false hope. The Australian embassy in Jakarta was informed on September 20 of the internment on Atauro of 90 Timorese members of the Civil Guard (*Hansip*) "whose loyalty was suspect". The embassy then calculated the number of detainees to be about 2,100.



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17 Avenue de la Paix,
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ICRC halts action on main island of East Timor

The International Committee of the Red Cross has suspended its activities on the main island of East Timor. Meanwhile, the Committee is continuing its aid programme in cooperation with the Indonesian Red Cross on the island.

Limitations not new

While ICRC and Australian Government documents carefully avoid linking restrictions on ICRC to new Indonesian military operations, this is certainly the case. It is not the first time ICRC has been excluded from Timor during Indonesian military offensives.

It should never be forgotten that ICRC operated in East Timor after the 1975 civil war up until the Indonesian invasion on December 7 of that year. ICRC was then excluded from East Timor by Jakarta until 1979 – that is until the completion of major military operations (1976-78) to gain administrative control of the bulk of the population.

It is also worth noting that there was no ICRC presence on East Timor during the next major military operation in late 1981. Normally making monthly visits from Jakarta, the ICRC delegate was absent from East Timor from June 24 to October 20 of that year. Indonesia's 'fence of legs' offensive (*Operasi Keamanan*) was conducted during July, August and September 1981.

The restricted access to prisoners has been a notable feature of the ICRC presence in East Timor since 1979. This limited access compares very unfavourably with the ICRC experience in East Timor before the invasion. Within two days of arriving in Dili on 28 August 1975, the ICRC delegate made three visits to 100 prisoners held by Fretilin. Fifteen places of detention were visited in September-October; 33 visits were made to 18 places from mid-October to mid-November 1975. An ICRC Report (13/10/75) said simply: "ICRC has free access to all prisoners."

ICRC needs support

The decision to formally and publicly withdraw from participation in aid programs on mainland East Timor and to publicly insist on access to all prisons in the territory marks a new phase in the ICRC approach to the East Timor issue.

ICRC is clearly not prepared to quietly accept vague assurances from Jakarta that the programs might be able to resume in November or December (that is, when Indonesian military manoeuvres cease). It is ready to implement important programs when its conditions are accepted by Jakarta. Indonesian Red Cross, through which ICRC has worked since 1979, will not be entrusted with ICRC relief supplies while ICRC cannot monitor the distribution process.

The new Indonesian offensive in East Timor is certain to cause new problems for the East Timorese. These will be compounded by the absence of International Red Cross. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that ICRC has 'gone public' in the hope of receiving some diplomatic support for its requirements.

Our own Government's response to this issue has, so far, been less than impressive.

New army chief is hardliner on Timor

The man responsible for the current intensification of the war in East Timor is General Benny Murdani who in March this year was made Supreme Commander of Indonesia's 400,000-man armed forces.

Murdani, who is 50, Javanese, and a Catholic, visited East Timor in July to celebrate Moslem Lebaran with his troops and on August 16 informed the Jakarta press that if Fretilin did not surrender Indonesia would "hit them without mercy" and "use its armed forces and all its arsenal to clean (them) up". Later that same month he removed the head of the armed forces in East Timor, Colonel Purwanto, who had pursued a 'hearts and minds' strategy, and installed a hardliner.

Murdani's record amply demonstrates his marked preference for the military option as a problem solver, leading President Suharto to remark on one occasion: "If you listen to Benny you'll be in a war every day" (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 21, 1983).

He engaged in paratroop operations against rebel Indonesian army units in 1957-8. In 1962 he dropped behind Dutch lines in West New Guinea as part of an operation designed to integrate what is now Irian Jaya into Indonesia. The early 60's saw him involved in the military confrontation against Malaysia. He gained international prominence in 1981 when he flew to Bangkok to take personal charge of an Indonesian commando raid on a hijacked Garuda airliner.

Hawk on East Timor

His line on East Timor has been consistently hawkish.

As early as February 1975, he was involved in the Indonesian armed forces joint exercises in Lampung, South Sumatra, which were widely reported at the time as a dress rehearsal for the invasion of East Timor. He was a key influence in Suharto's decision, late in 1975, to abandon his preferred political strategy in favour of direct military intervention. When the full-scale invasion came on December 7, 1975 he was ultimately responsible.



This time no more fooling around. We are going to hit them without mercy.

General Murdani's threat against Fretilin Sinor Harapan, August 16, 1983

Murdani, a close confidant of the President, now enjoys "an unprecedented range of powers" in Indonesia (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, Sept. 1983).

As Commander of the Armed Forces, Commander of the Strategic Intelligence Centre, Commander of Kopkamtib (the Operational Command for the Restoration of Security and Order) and head of Defence Intelligence, he controls all the major levels of power in the armed forces which, in turn, control Indonesia.

He is supremely well-placed to finish the task in East Timor he began in 1975.

UN defers Timor vote

In a move that took most Timor watchers by surprise, the General (or Steering) Committee of the UN General Assembly decided on September 21 to defer debate on the East Timor question until the 39th session in twelve months time.

The postponement was proposed by Norway's Ambassador, Tom Eric Vraalsen, was adopted by the Committee without debate and ratified by the full Assembly on September 23.

The move followed an announcement by the Secretary General on August 19, that he would not report on East Timor this year because of "recent developments". Whether the term "recent developments" was a reference to the talks between Fretilin and Indonesia inside East Timor, to Jakarta's new offensive, or to behind the scenes diplomatic activity at the UN, is not clear. It is likely, however, that the deferral was, at least in part, motivated by the Secretary General's desire to defuse the issue and promote a climate in which negotiations between Portugal and Indonesia could proceed. As Vraalsen is reported to have observed: "A confrontation in the Assembly at this time would not have been helpful and might possibly have had a negative effect on the contacts that are going on" (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, Oct 6, 1983). This sentiment is echoed in a recent letter from Mr Hayden. "The Government also hopes", the Foreign Minister observes, "that the deferral of the East Timor item will produce a less divisive and more cooperative atmosphere which ultimately will lead to the achievement of a lasting settlement of the East Timor issue".

Hayden's brief reference to East Timor in his wide-ranging statement to the General Assembly on October 4, is slightly more explicit. After repeating Australia's concern "that an internationally supervised and accepted act of self-determination, had not taken place" (in East Timor) he expresses the hope (entirely at odds with the expressed concern about self-determination, one might note) "that Indonesia and Portugal will be able to use the time between now and the next General Assembly to reach a lasting settlement of this question; a settlement which will take account of the best interests of the people of East Timor".

Perez de Cuellar's assignment of Undersecretary-General, Rafeuddin Ahmed — his special representative on South East Asian humanitarian affairs, to help settle the dispute certainly suggests that a

more vigorous attempt will be made to push through a diplomatic solution in 1984 — but without the involvement of the Timorese, one fears.

Reaction to the deferral

For many different reasons, the deferral of the UN vote was greeted with sighs of relief all round.

Had the vote been taken the issue may well have been defeated and dropped from the UN agenda — a major humiliation for Portugal and a mortal blow to Fretilin's diplomatic struggle. Last year's resolution in favour of self-determination was carried by only 4 votes.

Deferral spared Indonesia its ninth year of public reprobation as the new offensive may well have cost it the victory it so earnestly sought. It has also provided extra time "to mobilise more pro-Indonesia votes" as the *Indonesian Times* pointed out in an editorial.

Deferral let the Hawke Government off the hook. Had it abstained or voted for the resolution Indonesia would have been offended. Had it voted with Indonesia it would have incurred strong criticism at home both within the community and within the Party itself whose official policy favours self-determination. (It should be noted, however, that Fretilin's representative at the UN, Jose Ramos Horta, is adamant that Hayden informed the Portuguese Foreign Minister that Australia would have voted with Indonesia had the issue been put to the vote).

The next domestic milestone on the issue for the Australian Government will be the Federal Conference of the Labor Party due to be held in Canberra in July 1984.

The deferral has not meant the issue has been swept under the carpet altogether at the UN this year. Some member states, including Australia as mentioned above, have made reference to the issue in both the 4th Committee and the General Assembly. And Fretilin expect the 3rd Committee, which deals with human rights, will formally address the subject.

Vanuatu's challenge

Vanuatu's Prime Minister, Father Walter Lini, delivered a particularly impassioned appeal to both Indonesia and the UN itself in the course of his broader UN address. Attacking "the moral bankruptcy of those who speak so eloquently on other matters but who remain silent on the question of East Timor", he went on to ask with what moral authority could the UN challenge other territorial annexations or human rights abuses if Indonesia's actions in East Timor were condoned. "Let the people (of East Timor) decide their own fate, and let the UN assist in that process. This is why we have a United Nations", he concluded.

Minister to review Timor admissions policy

"New refugee movements will result from the current Indonesian military campaign in Timor", Melbourne's Timorese welfare officer, Joao Goncalves, claimed recently. "The effects of the offensive on families, both here and in East Timor, have been completely overlooked", he says.

At a meeting in Melbourne in October, representatives of the Timorese community asked the Federal Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Mr Stuart West, to do more for Timorese seeking admission to Australia. The Minister conceded the Fraser Government had not done enough and that more could be done. However, he warned Timorese not to build up expectations reminding them that control over departures from East Timor and Indonesia rested with the Indonesian Government. Recent attempts by the Australian Government to win Indonesian support for the extension of family reunions beyond those on the 600 list and those in category 1 have not been positively received, said the Minister, though neither had Jakarta finally closed the door on the possibility.

Australia's 6,000 or so Timorese have lodged hundreds of family reunion applications, many of which lie unresolved in Immigration Department files.

Over recent months, however, there has been with International Red Cross assistance a small but regular movement from Timor to Australia of families on the list of 600 agreed to by Indonesia and Australia in 1978.

The Australian Government in fact expects the remaining 35 cases to be settled by Christmas this year.

There are several areas where, free of Indonesian constraints and sensitivities, the Australian Government can act.

The Melbourne Timorese reminded the Minister that there are an estimated 500 Timorese in Portugal many of whom wish to come to Australia but are presently ineligible because they do not meet normal family reunion requirements or left East Timor after September 30, 1980, the cut-off point regulating admission to Australia under the Special Humanitarian Programme instituted by the Fraser Government in 1980. In response the Minister undertook to examine both the possibility of extending the Special Humanitarian Programme deadline and the possibility of friends and organisations being permitted to sponsor Timorese in Portugal who have no relatives here. The Minister also waived the necessity for sponsors to arrange firm job offers in advance of their nominee's arrival.

ALP policy

In this context it is appropriate to note that ALP policy as defined at the 1982 National Conference, "supports the principle of free migration of East Timorese, including refugees, and believes Australia has an obligation and ability to assist East Timorese to come to Australia" and pledges that "an ALP Government will bring to Australia all Timorese who wish to come here".



Contributions to help defray costs of production and postage would be most welcome.