



FRENTE REVOLUCIONÁRIA DO TIMOR-LESTE INDEPENDENTE
FRETILIN

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FRETILIN demonstrates peacefully in Dili

Six thousand FRETILIN militants and supporters entered Dili yesterday afternoon in a peaceful, disciplined convoy of over one hundred and fifty trucks, buses and cars, to deliver a message to the President of the Republic. The rally was twice the size of anything seen on the streets of Dili in the last few weeks.

“We have a simple message,” said Filomeno Aleixo, from the protest organising committee. “Respect the Constitution and the rule of law. Recognise FRETILIN’s democratic mandate to govern until the next election. Do not waste the work we have done together for years. Work together with the Parliament and the other organs of State for the welfare of the people.”

The demonstrators chanted Viva FRETILIN, Viva Alkatiri, Viva Lu’olo, and sang East Timorese nationalist songs as they drove from Metinaro into Dili. Thousands stayed patient in the hot sun for hours, as international forces searched every vehicle. Despite some attempts from anti-FRETILIN elements in Dili to provoke the huge rally with rock-throwing and abuse, the demonstration remained calm. “We have asked the President and other parties to stop the abuse of individuals which insults their dignity and does not respect their rights,” said Mr Aleixo. “We do not need to do this. We have a democracy, we have our own Constitution. People have to express their views peacefully and through voting”.

The rally revealed FRETILIN’s deep roots in the districts and in the independence struggle. Many protest organisers and participants were veterans of that struggle, reflected in the tight organization and attention to security. “Our militants and supporters respect their leaders, from the top to the bottom,” said FRETILIN Information Committee member Filomena DeAlmeida. “Our party fought for the people throughout the Indonesian occupation, and we rely on their support. People who attack FRETILIN need to think again. We have a democratic mandate”.

Mr Aleixo called on the media not to keep talking about east and west. “We are not Lorosae, we are not Loromonu. We are FRETILIN. With more resources, we can bring just as many people from other districts. Our support in all districts is clear from the voting figures”. Last night, several thousand protestors who stayed in town were fed by Dili members of FRETILIN, who were encouraged not to join the rally for fear of reprisals after the protest leaves. The international forces are guaranteeing security.

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