



FRENTE REVOLUCIONÁRIA DO TIMOR-LESTE INDEPENDENTE

FRETILIN

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Fretilin condemns Xanana's abuse of power

Fretilin, the largest political party in Timor-Leste (East Timor) today accused the country's outgoing president of Xanana Gusmao of abusing the office of head of state to interfere in elections to choose a new president.

Filomeno Aleixo, a member of the party's central committee and national political commission, said President Gusmao was filmed on national television attending a rally in support of Jose Ramos Horta's presidential campaign at Dili Stadium yesterday.

"The President of the Republic is supposed to be an independent person and should not be endorsing candidates in elections. This is a clear abuse of his power as President", Aleixo said "As the head of state, the President should be setting an example by promoting a fair and transparent vote. It is his role to strengthen the independence of the country's institutions and ensure that there is no manipulation of the presidential elections.

"The president has no right to use his office to try to hand pick his successor."

Fretilin is supporting the former guerrilla fighter and parliamentary chairman Francisco Guterres Lu Olo for president.

Aleixo said the latest comments by Father Martinho Gusmao, the Catholic church's representative on the National Electoral Commission and the commission's official spokesperson, clearly prejudiced the outcome of Monday's ballot.

Martinho Gusmao, director of the justice and peace commission for the Baucau diocese, voiced support for a presidential candidate, Fernando de Araujo "Lasama" at a Jakarta Press Club workshop in Dili yesterday.

He also told the workshop he was drafting the bishops' pastoral letter to be read on Easter Sunday the day before Monday's election.

"For the commission's spokesperson to openly declare support for a candidate is a flagrant and serious abuse of power," Aleixo said.

Aleixo called on the Catholic Church to remove Martinho as its representative on the Electoral Commission and for the commission to remove him as commission spokesman.

Aleixo said many senior church figures recognised the need for the church to remain impartial during the electoral process and Fretilin had no problem with the behaviour of the church as a whole during the campaign.

"Fretilin will lodge a complaint to the Commission in relation to this latest demonstration of blatant political bias by Martinho Gusmao," he said.

“A spokesperson for the National Electoral Commission should not be openly declaring his support for any candidate. His job is to help ensure the commission acts as an independent body in the service of free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections.

“This is the latest in a series of statements by Martinho Gusmao, to both local and international media which have been designed to manipulate the electoral process.

“The electoral commission needs to act against Martinho Gusmao in order to regain some semblance of impartiality.”

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