

Francisco Guterres Lu Olo for President

“I shall be a President of all and for all”

Media release

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Respect judicial independence, Lu Olo tells Horta

Presidential candidate Francisco Guterres Lu Olo today called on his opponent Jose Ramos Horta to abide by the Constitution and stop interfering with the judiciary.

Lu Olo said that if elected he would immediately move together with the government, the parliament and development partners to secure the resources needed to assist the Prosecutor General's office in its work, especially reinforce its independence.

This was a key recommendation of the Report of the United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste released in October.

Yesterday (24 April) Mr Horta announced that if elected he would order the Prosecutor General to re-open his investigation of events in May-June last year.

Lu Olo pointed out: “It is unconstitutional for the President of the Republic to interfere in the operation of the Office of the Prosecutor-General. The Constitution is very clear on this point and it is irresponsible to suggest otherwise. All our leaders have a responsibility to educate the people on the way our justice system works in our new democracy.”

Lu Olo asked people to remember the warning of the UN Independent Special Commission of Inquiry that perceived interference by the President in the functioning of the Prosecutor's Office was a problem requiring attention.

“Think about this. Do we want our President to be able to decide who will and will not be prosecuted, like it was in Suharto's time?” Lu Olo asked.

Lu Olo pointed out that a number of independent international investigations and reports on the crisis, including the United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry, identified the “fragile state of the justice system” as a major contributor to the crisis which arose in May 2006 and caused much suffering to the people of Timor-Leste.

Lu Olo said: “The weak judicial institutions of our young constitutional democracy need to be strengthened. I have consistently advocated the need for those of us in leadership positions to respect our constitutional and democratic institutions. Recognising the independence of our judicial and other key institutions must be our full focus. Mr. Horta has persistently failed to do this in his time as Prime Minister and is now indicating he would continue to jeopardise judicial independence if he became President.”

Lu Olo said: "I make this undertaking - as President, I will immediately move to work with the other state organs to secure the necessary resources to ensure that the judiciary and Prosecutor General's Office function with independence and transparency. "

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