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2007 Parliamentary Elections

“Defending Timor-Leste’s independence”

Media release

14 June 2007

FRETILIN condemns violence in Ermera district, demands action be taken by the UN Police

FRETILIN today demanded that the UN Police immediately take action to halt the violence and intimidation of its members in Ermera district west of Dili which has led to more than 140 people taking refuge in Dili.

Francisco Soares, a FRETILIN parliamentarian, said “The refugees arrived in Dili yesterday with 80 people taking refuge at a camp located at Campo Alor in Dili and 60 people taking refuge at a camp located at Parque Borja Da Costa also in Dili.”

Soares said that the people taking refuge in the camps have come out of hiding from coffee plantations in Ermera district after they had initially fled their homes following intimidation and the destruction of houses in the Ermera sucos (administrative level) of Lisapat and Urahu.

He added, “Another group of people that had taken refuge in the Gleno district administration office in Ermera were also expected to arrive in Dili in the coming days.”

Soares also demanded that the UN Police investigate a complaint made last week to the National Parliament that FRETILIN members had been taken hostage by supporters of an opposition party, alleged to be the Democratic Party (PD), and kept under house arrest for three days in the suco of Potete.

“Representatives of the hostages, who had managed to escape from their detention, alleged that during the period of house arrest the captors demanded that the list of FRETILIN members in Ermera district be provided.”

Soares called for the UN Police to act immediately to halt the violence and intimidation in Ermera district and for a proper and independent investigation to be made into all claims of violence and intimidation.

“It is becoming almost impossible for our party to campaign freely in Ermera district for the 30 June parliamentary elections because of the violence and intimidation.”

Soares continued, “This is not the first time we have called attention to the insecure situation in Ermera and other districts. We have alerted the UN and ISF about previous instances of violence during high level meetings between the government, parliament and the international forces, but to date no effective action has been taken.”

“The UN Police and the International Stabilisation Force are here to restore security and to enable the elections to proceed freely and fairly. They must also investigate claims about the possession of arms by civilians in the district of Ermera and take the necessary measures to facilitate the disarmament of people in that district.

“If the UN Police and the ISF is unable to control the situation in Ermera and other districts there will be a need to review the existing mechanisms and evaluate its effectiveness.”

“FRETILIN condemns all forms of intimidation and violence. The perpetrators of violence and intimidation should be brought before the courts so that justice can be served. This is important so that free and fair elections can be held.”

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