



FRENTE REVOLUCIONÁRIA DO TIMOR-LESTE INDEPENDENTE FRETILIN

Media Release
Friday 18 May 2007

Fretilin push to clean up elections

Fretilin has used its majority in the National Parliament to amend the Parliamentary Elections Law in an effort to prevent activities such as voter intimidation and vote buying.

The amendments, which include penalties of imprisonment and hefty fines, are aimed at "cleaning up negative electioneering of the type employed in the Presidential elections against Fretilin's candidate," said Francisco Branco MP, a Fretilin Central Committee member speaking in Dili today.

"Once Lu Olo emerged with the highest vote in counting for the first round in April, there were continuous allegations against Fretilin of vote buying and voter intimidation, without evidence being produced."

Parliament passed the amendments, introduced by Branco and fellow Fretilin MP Elizario Ferreira, on Tuesday 15 May 2007.

Branco said many national and international government and non-government bodies and observer groups had lobbied for such amendments. For example, the European Union Election Observer Mission recommended: "the Electoral Law needs to be amended to provide enforcement powers...for example to issue fines."

Branco said: "We are certain the amended law will provide enough sanctions to clean up campaigning and create a level playing field for all, especially in the media - an area where Fretilin was extensively victimized without legal recourse."

Members of Parliament from the Democratic Party and Social Democratic Party walked out of parliament when debate on these amendments began, raising doubts about their commitment to democratic electoral practices.

The amendments contain fines and jail terms for offences such as:

- non-compliance by individuals with obligations set out in the law
- improper use of names and symbols of other political parties by parties or candidates
- undertaking campaign activities after the expiration of the official election campaign period
- sale and consumption of alcohol within 100 meters of a voting centre
- abuse of power by civil servants and/or state officials aimed at restricting voters from exercising their voting rights or inducing voters to vote for a particular candidate
- threatening an employee with dismissal or other sanction, or refusing to grant employment, in order to influence a voter's voting intention
- offering, promising or giving public or private employment or some other advantage to one or more voters whether directly or indirectly to influence his or her vote – as well as accepting such a bribe
- tampering with ballot papers

- failure by the Chair of the voting centre to receive and process a complaint relating to the electoral process
- failure by Police Officers to attend a voting centre when officially designated to do so
- deliberately and willfully but falsely accusing another person of breaching the electoral law
- lodging complaints made in bad faith and without foundation regarding the electoral authorities and their lawful decisions
- being unlawfully armed with a weapon at a voting station.

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