



Vote for FRETILIN!

2007 Parliamentary Elections

“Defending Timor-Leste’s independence”

Briefing paper for international journalists

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Important questions answered by FRETILIN

Why did Fretilin agree to nominate Jose Ramos Horta to replace Mari Alkatiri?

The nation was in a crisis and a civil war imminent if Fretilin did not agree with the President's demand to appoint Jose Ramos Horta as Prime Minister. He was not our first choice- Estanislau Da Silva was our first choice and Rui Araujo was our second choice. However, although it is our right under the Constitution, as the party with the parliamentary majority, to choose the head of government, we were aware that the President would not allow either of them to become PM and preferred Jose Ramos Horta.

Ramos Horta was therefore a compromise candidate who was chosen so that we could move on from the confrontation and crisis with the President. At the time some people were also saying it was the best way to resolve the crisis. We can see today that was not the case. The appointment of Ramos Horta as PM did not resolve anything and the country is still in crisis, with many issues unresolved. These include the need to restore security, law and order, the issue of the petitioners, the failure to arrest Reinado and Railos and the failure to create the conditions for the IDPs to return home.

Why should people vote for Fretilin?

People should vote for Fretilin because we are a party that promotes the rule of law, respect for the constitution and sustainable development for our country and our people. We always put the interests of Timor-Leste first and believe firmly that East Timorese, not foreigners, must govern themselves. We also now have the experience of the first five years of government which we can learn from to improve the lives of people.

We admit that the first five years of government was absorbed by the bureaucratic works to establish the necessary instruments that could serve as the basis for administering the country democratically and to seek for resources. As a result the FRETILIN government did not have sufficient time to go to the districts to meet with the people to explain government policies. We also did not focus enough on the youth who are the inspiring and creative force of society and we have taken for granted the support of the people of Timor-Leste. We apologize for these mistakes and we will learn from them.

The first five years of government were difficult because most of the money to run the budget came from development partners. They had a big influence in the types of investment made and the amounts invested, and did not allow us to spend much of our money except on key priorities such as health and education. Just for comparison, our first budget was around USD\$85,000,000. However, the country now has money to spend because of the revenue from the petroleum resources which has increased the budget to USD\$327,000,000. The larger budget will enable the government to do a lot more.

Take for example the community development fund which has been recently launched by former Minister for Agriculture and current Prime Minister Estanislau Da Silva. Under the community development fund each Suco will receive \$10,000 USD from the government to spend on community projects. There is also a plan to spend more than US\$ 100 million on capital investment that will

create job opportunity for ten of thousands of Timorese and improve substantially the constitution of our roads, schools, hospitals and other public facilities.

We have also made good progress in the areas of health and agriculture. The country also has no debt which has been praised by international multi-lateral institutions such as the International Monetary Fund. Having no debt means that East Timorese have greater control over the economy.

Also, development of this nation has been strong and steady considering the challenges we faced over the last five years in building the country from nothing. The FRETILIN government now also has the experience of five years which it can learn from to govern the country more effectively and make real improvements to the lives of East Timorese.

Why are our people still poor?

Eradicating poverty from Timor-Leste will take many years. It is not just about spending money from the petroleum fund, but spending it responsibly so that we are not forced into borrowing money on unfavorable terms. An important thing to be remembered is that this money was generated from non-renewable resources. As a result, part of the money needs to be invested in activities that are sustainable and able to stimulate the emergence of economic activities that will replace funds generated from non-renewable resources.

The FRETILIN plan to eradicate poverty is drawn from the National Development Plan which was developed through a nation wide consultation exercise. The focus of the National Development Plan is health, agriculture, education and infrastructure. The National Development Plan will provide sustainable economic development and its focus is to empower the East Timorese to take care of themselves and to be able to govern themselves.

It must be remembered that the Indonesian military destroyed most of our infrastructure when they left in 1999. Also, during the Indonesian occupation, the Indonesian government actively refrained from providing the East Timorese with access to senior level postings with planning and decision making authority. It is true that some East Timorese did study abroad, but the opportunities were limited. Part of the strategy of the Indonesian military was to prevent our people from gaining high quality education so as to stand on their own feet. Our economic program, as per the National Development Plan is to eradicate poverty and help East Timorese to govern themselves.

In 1975, FRETILIN told the people that one day Timor-Leste would be independent and no one believed us. We also told the people it would not be easy and that it would take time. Many people told us that it would not be possible and that we only dreaming about independence. We proved them wrong.

FRETILIN promises today that we will eradicate poverty and that we will bring benefits to our people, but that we will do it sustainable and in a way that does not compromise our economic and political independence. FRETILIN has the program to eradicate poverty and it has begun implementing that program and will continue to do so if it is elected again.

Why haven't you spent more time in the districts?

Trying to build a nation from zero is very difficult and took up the party's time and resources. It is through the government and parliament that FRETILIN is able to implement its programs so this received our attention for the first years. Looking back now, we realize that we should have spent more time in the districts informing people about our program and focusing on the political education of our members, especially the younger generation. The FRETILIN government like every other institution and person is also learning about its role and responsibilities in an independent Timor-Leste.

Whether we win the parliamentary elections or not, the party will make it a priority to disseminate information about its program and to make greater efforts to provide a political education to our members.

Why is Mari Alkatiri not running for Prime Minister?

Mari Alkatiri is not running for Prime Minister because he believes the party needs strengthening, restructuring and an active leadership. Mari Alkatiri has also vowed that he will begin promoting a new generation of leaders. This can be seen from the parliamentary list where we have several young members high on the list.

Should we change the constitution?

The Constitution is one of the most progressive in the world. We believe that it is a very good constitution, but civic education in relation to the Constitution needs to be increased so that East Timorese understand how the institutions function and also about their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

The debate about changing constitution shall be grounded on an overall analysis about the need to respond to the national interest and not individual or certain group interests. In the constitution there is a provision that allows the parliament to carry out revision after 6 years of its entry into force. It is important for us to reflect on why we need to change the constitution and, in particular, which parts of the constitution that no longer respond to our national interest. We shall always keep in mind that the Constitution is the reference for other laws, it provides the foundation upon which the other laws in the country are made and it provides us with our sense of being as an independent country. Day-to-day matters are handled through laws and decree laws not by Constitution.

One of the problems that people don't understand is that real decision making power lies with the Parliament and the Government, not the President. This is different to the Indonesian system where all the power is with the President. The constitution was structured this way so as to avoid a dictatorship from emerging.

Why has FRETILIN changed its position on prosecution of war crimes committed between 1975 and 1999? Will this mean that war crimes by FRETILIN in this period will also be prosecuted?

FRETILIN's position has always been to prosecute those who have committed war crimes in this period regardless of their political affiliation. This is what the people of Timor-Leste want and we have not changed our position.

Will Fretilin accept the result if it loses the parliamentary elections?

Yes, as long as the election is carried out according to the electoral law we have no reason not to accept the outcome of the election. We subscribed to the democratic system, the logic is that we shall abide by universal democratic mechanisms. We might contest the process but not the outcome. We are a party that respects the rule of law and wants to promote democracy in Timor-Leste.

If we have any complaints about the election result we will deal with them through the proper institutional channels and in accordance with the law and due process.

What will FRETILIN do if it goes into opposition?

FRETILIN believes that regardless of the result the party will win. It is our preference to be able to govern the country so that we can continue our progressive programs for social and economic development. However, if we go into opposition we will focus on restructuring the party and becoming a constructive and effective opposition that promotes Timor-Leste's interest not only our individual or group interest. We will also use the time in opposition to begin promoting a new generation of leaders which can contest the 2012 elections. Having effective opposition is also important for democracy.

What are we voting for in the parliamentary elections?

It is very important for people to vote for FRETILIN so that we can form government and continue our progressive programs.

The parliamentary elections are about voting for a party, not an individual, which is best suited to represent the people in the supreme law making body, the National Parliament. The party, or a coalition of parties, which has the majority of seats in the National Parliament can form government and appoint the Prime Minister.

It must be remembered that the parliamentary vote is not a vote for an individual, but for a team of people. FRETILIN believes that it has the best team to take the country forward, with the experience and wisdom of the older generation and the dynamism and drive of the younger generation. Just take a look at some of the younger leaders that are becoming more prominent- people like Aniceto Guterres, Cipriana Pereira, Arsenio Bano, Adalgiza Magno, Jose Reis, Jose Manuel Fernandes, Hernani Coelho da Silva, just to name a few.

Some of the opposition party leaders have tried to create the perception that FRETILIN is only about one or two people by targeting our leaders, however, we know from history that FRETILIN has always been about the people and for the people and not about any particular individual.

Why haven't Reinado and Railos been arrested?

Reinado and Railos like others recommended for prosecution by the UN report must be arrested and tried in accordance with the rule of law and due process. Anyone recommended for prosecution has a right to defend themselves in court and FRETILIN will not interfere in that process.

What about the allegations of guns distribution to arm a hit squad to kill his political opponents?

The allegations are false. Rogerio Lobato did not arm a hit squad to kill his political opponents and this was confirmed by the Court of Appeal decision. Lobato armed civilians in support of the police. The problem was that he did not arm them in accordance with the law.

If it is true that FRETILIN has armed hit squad FRETILIN members shall have enjoyed greater protection and suffered less. The fact is that many FRETILIN members lost their properties and were physically and verbally abused. Mr. Railos' allegation is contradictory to his actions. He used the guns to attack the F-FDTL which is a non-partisan army and clearly not a FRETILIN opponent. How can a FRETILIN armed hit squad attack institutions that it is proud of and has a long history with?

It is also important to remember that Lobato was never going to have a fair trial because he was in the first instance sentenced by the media and several prominent national and regional figures. Lobato was actually sentenced prior to going to court. The fact that his trial was political was confirmed by the independent NGOs (an example is JSMP).

We are not promoting East Timorese who were inside the country for the entire period of the 24 year occupation or who were educated in Indonesia?

For FRETILIN there is only two classes of people in Timor-Leste, Timorese nationals and non-Timorese nationals. Regardless of their origin, their background, their beliefs and political choices they have the same right and responsibilities. We will throw our support behind those that work to advance our national interest. As long as they devote their souls and minds for Timor-Leste they shall be accorded the opportunity to prove their merits. We are a small country with very limited human resources. We need to make good use of what we have.

Many people criticized us for being discriminative. We will call on you to take a closer look at our public service and you will realize that many of our directors are not even members of the FRETILIN party. Take a look at the structure and numbers and compare it with other countries before pin pointing defects. It is important for everyone to help educate our people not to poison our own people for the sake of individual gains. Being a politician requires responsibility and the Timorese people deserve politicians that are good leaders.

We still live in fear of armed gangs, what are you going to do to create security and re-establish law and order?

That is a matter of fact that our people still live under these circumstances. We have in the country the UN and the ISF whose role is to provide security whilst we reorganize our own defense and security institutions. It is necessary for those with the responsibility for security to ensure that the people have confidence in them. In terms of law and order, we have a separation of power between state institutions with the courts and prosecutor general being independent from the Government. We do

have the basic mechanisms, but our shortfalls are in our capacity to enforce the law and provide an effective and efficient justice service to our people. There are many constraints, such as qualified judges, lawyers and so on. Another important ingredient that is missing is encouragement and the setting of good examples from our own leaders.

Resolution to the problem requires concerted action and serious commitment. We need to find the way to align our judiciary system and our law enforcement institutions. We need to have both persuasive and coercive capabilities. Government authority needs to be restored and the rule of law must be instated.

How will you facilitate the return of the people to their homes from the IDP camps?

The return of the IDPs is linked to the restoration of security and law and order. People will not return home until the people feel secure. The issue about security has been discussed above. If we are able to restore security the people in the refugee camps will return home. Apart from the security issue we also need to think about livelihood opportunities for them once they return home. Many of them lost not only their properties but also their source of income. This is a double front that we need to address and a future FRETILIN Government is clear about what it intends to do. Our approach will not only focus on the return of these people to a normal life but also to enhance their life and contribute to regaining their trust on the rule of law in our country. We are serious about this issue and, we will go deep into the root causes of the problem. It is not just opportunistic political rhetoric to win the election.

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