



FRENTE REVOLUCIONÁRIA DO TIMOR-LESTE INDEPENDENTE
FRETILIN

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Media Release

Mari Alkatiri receives Timor-Leste's highest award

Dr Mari Alkatiri, Secretary General of FRETILIN, has received Timor-Leste's highest award, the Dom Boaventura medal, in recognition of his contribution to the nation's struggle for independence.

The medal is a tribute to Dr Alkatiri's role as a founder of the liberation movement turned political party FRETILIN and his efforts on the Timorese diplomatic front from 1975 to 1979.

The Dom Boaventura medal is Timor-Leste's highest award. It was presented by outgoing President, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, at a ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Dili on 19 May.

The ceremony was attended by members of the government and parliament, representatives of political parties and religious bodies.

"I have always fought and worked for Timor-Leste, my country, and I will continue to do so," Dr Alkatiri told reporters after the award ceremony.

At the same ceremony, the Dom Boaventura medal was also awarded to the late Nicolau Lobato, the legendary FRETILIN leader who was killed in combat on new year's eve 1978, and the newly elected President, Jose Ramos Horta.

Other members of FRETILIN who contributed to the independence struggle from 1975 to 1979 have received the Dom Boaventura medal in previous ceremonies.

On 20 May 1974 Dr Alkatiri co-founded the Timorese Social Democratic Association (ASDT) which later became FRETILIN. He was part of the unilateral declaration of independence on 28 November 1975 and also the Senior Minister for Political Affairs in the first Government of Timor-Leste established in 1975.

Knowing the Indonesian invasion would take place, the Central Committee of FRETILIN decided to send Alkatiri, Ramos Horta and Rogerio Lobato overseas, to set up the diplomatic front. Alkatiri, as Head of the Diplomatic Front left Timor-Leste on 4 December 1975.

"I did not want to leave Timor Leste on the eve of the Indonesian invasion, but I had to follow a decision made by the Central Committee of FRETILIN and I was specifically requested to do so by the then Vice President Nicolau Lobato," Dr Alkatiri said.

Dr Alkatiri was elected FRETILIN Vice President at the FRETILIN conference in Sydney in 1998.

He returned to Timor-Leste, after the referendum, in September 1999, and worked to restructure FRETILIN to enable party members to work together for the newly liberated country.

In 2001, Dr Alkatiri was elected FRETILIN secretary-general at the first National Congress, and was re-elected to the same position in 2006, at the second National Congress.

He was part of the first UN transitional Government as Head of the Office of Economic Affairs and Second UN Transitional Government as Chief Minister. In May 2002, FRETILIN as the political party with the absolute majority in Parliament nominated Alkatiri to become the Prime Minister of the first Constitutional Government. Dr Alkatiri took office as the Prime-Minister on 20 May 2002, the day of the Restoration of Timor-Leste's Independence.

During four years of leading the government, Alkatiri was commended by local and international commentators for great policy achievements, including the Timor Sea petroleum negotiations with Australia, the creation of the Petroleum Fund and the establishment of free health care and education.

On 26 June 2006, Alkatiri was forced to resign as Prime Minister after anti-government and anti-FRETILIN forces deliberately destabilised the democratically elected government in order to bring about regime change.

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