



FRENTE REVOLUCIONÁRIA DO TIMOR-LESTE INDEPENDENTE
FRETILIN

**Media release
20 August 2007**

Australian troops provoke more unrest in Timor Leste

Australian troops in Timor Leste have inflamed an already volatile situation by tearing up FRETILIN flags and wiping their backsides with it, FRETILIN Vice President and MP Arsenio Bano said today.

“The trashing of FRETILIN flags is yet another demonstration of the partisan nature of the Howard government’s military intervention in Timor Leste,” Bano said.

He said the incidents occurred in the eastern part of the country on 18 August, at two separate locations – Suco (administrative region) Walili on the road between Baucau and Viqueque and in the village of Alala in Viqueque district – where villagers had raised the FRETILIN flag in protest against the unconstitutional government of Jose Alexandre Gusmao.

“At Walili two Australian military vehicles full of soldiers tore up a FRETILIN flag which had been raised at the roadside, wiped their backsides with it and drove off with the flag. The stolen flag was returned by an Australian army captain later that day.

“In Alala village Australian troops tried to sever a FRETILIN flag from its rope and then drove over it.

“We condemn these extremely provocative actions which have inflamed an already volatile situation. The FRETILIN flag has enormous symbolic and emotional value to the people of Timor-Leste which extends beyond FRETILIN’s members and supporters.

“Tens of thousands of people died fighting under this flag during the struggle for independence, including family members of the people who witnessed its trashing on Saturday.

“The Australian soldiers have insulted our martyrs and the entire East Timorese people. Their cultural insensitivity and arrogance typifies Australian military operations in the Pacific region.”

Bano said the incidents could not be excused as the actions of misguided individual soldiers.

“The soldiers take their cue from their officers who understand the true objectives of the Howard government’s partisan intervention in Timor-Leste, which has had one overriding aim – the removal of the democratically elected FRETILIN government and its replacement with the illegitimate government of Jose Alexandre Gusmao.”

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