



# EAST TIMOR UPDATE

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## Delegation of Canadian MPs

In May, there was supposed to be a Canadian parliamentary mission going to East Timor. It was delayed until after the election, however.

There has only been one Canadian parliamentary mission to East Timor before, and it was an appalling whitewash. They met the Indonesian-appointed governor of East Timor, "Dili's priest," and "a Belgian missionary" and asked about human rights. "From their responses," the delegation notes in its report, "this did not seem to be a subject of much concern." Delegation head Steve Paproski (Conservative, Edmonton North) told the Indonesian newspaper *Pembaruan* "we did not see any strange or illogical problems in the area.... Frankly, what we saw made us proud as human beings. Information on East Timor society abroad is very minimal and tends to be controversial and put Indonesia in a corner. Clearly, development of education here has been extraordinary. The conditions of the prisons fulfil ideal conditions."

I'm sure it won't be as bad this time, but it may end up being no use to East Timor if it is ignored by the solidarity movement. I see a number of things that can be done to make sure this trip is useful:

**1) Composition of the delegation.** Before the election, it was to be five MPs from all 3 official parties. If memory serves me right, they were: Liberals Shaughnessy Cohen (Windsor), John Godfrey (Toronto), John English (Kitchener), Stephane Bergeron (Bloc Quebecois) and Keith Martin (Reform, Victoria area). Not an impressive list, though it could be worse. I'd suggest that we press for an all-party delegation, certainly including the NDP (although the NDP's Nelson Riis was on the 1987 trip, they'd probably send Svend Robinson now, and in any case the NDP is now activated on East Timor in a way they were not ten years ago). A good composition might be two Liberals and one each from the other four parties (although I'm not sure if any of the Tories know anything about foreign policy, and we lack support in the Tory ridings in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Nfld and Estrie).

**2) Terms of reference.** It is important that the mission be allowed to travel freely, be accompanied by its own interpreter, and have the right to make a free and fair report to the Canadian public, without its terms of reference being limited to

human rights alone. If the mission sees that all in East Timor want self-determination, it should be able to say so.

**3) Local pressure.** Let the MPs going to East Timor know that their constituents are very concerned about East Timor — both for self-determination and human rights. Back up the demand of most of the Timorese for a referendum. We could do this by letters in advance and by seeking meetings with the MPs in their constituencies. ETAN support is sufficiently widespread that we can mobilize constituency pressure on (at a guess) about half of the sitting MPs.

**4) Alerting friends in the media.** Xanana Gusmao, in his defence plea some years ago, told Indonesia that it should admit political defeat on the East Timor question, as he was admitting military defeat. On the same grounds, the government of Canada should really be admitting that it has lost the battle for public opinion with ETAN, including the battle for media spin.

**5) Seeking accompaniment for the MPs from knowledgeable journalists.** This would mean urging the mission to allow journalists to come along, and urging media outlets to send them despite the high expense. We may even want to suggest NGO accompaniment.

**6) In support of all these points, there should be close coordination between ETAN, Parliamentarians for East Timor and other Canadian organizations active on East Timor.**

Peace,  
David Webster  
ETAN/Vancouver

*"The thinking of the old world has altered little: where there are profits to be defended, law, justice, freedom, democracy and peace are the victims. Only the peoples of one nation can help those of another."*

(Xanana Gusmao, leader of the East Timorese resistance. Cipinang prison, Jakarta, 1995)



## Urgent Appeal for imprisoned Activist

Dear friends of East Timor,

*This is an important time for East Timor: violations are increasing, but there are also new signs of hope. Together, we are making a difference.*

Please reply to:  
etantor@web.net

Friends of Jose Antonio Belo fear for his life after his arrest by Indonesian soldiers in East Timor.

Belo, 25, is a long-time organizer with the clandestine youth resistance in East Timor, who has refused several opportunities to seek refuge overseas. Earlier this year, he fled to join the armed resistance in the hills. Belo was captured on June 26 along with five others after an intensive operation involving more than 1,000 Indonesian soldiers. The operation was designed to capture David Alex, the resistance commander who has been most accessible to Western journalists. He appears in the film "In Cold Blood" and others.

David Alex himself has reportedly died in circumstances that remain unclear, although unconfirmed reports say he may still be alive and being tortured for information.

Belo is being held in the dreaded Rumah Merah prison. With David Alex dead or being tortured, Belo's friends are concerned about his fate. "This is a place where they have tortured so many people to death," said Bella Galhos, an East Timorese now living in Canada and a close friend of Belo. "Unless the international community intervenes, Jose and the others will be dead soon too."

A United Nations special rapporteur on torture has found that torture in East Timor is widespread and routine. A number of people have died under torture. This list may now include David Alex.

The overall situation in East Timor is becoming increasingly grim. The Indonesian armed forces have just announced that they will deploy an additional 6,000 troops to the country for stepped-up military operations. Hundreds of East Timorese civilians are reportedly being held without charge.

Following the award of the Nobel Peace Prize last year, the East Timorese resistance decided to engage in defensive actions only, in order to promote reconciliation and the peace plan advanced by Nobel laureate Jose Ramos Horta. However, the prize brought only harsher conditions for the people of East Timor. Accordingly, the resistance resumed attacks on Indonesian soldiers in May.

Now, Indonesia has struck back with the crudely-named Operasi Tuntas (Operation Annihilation).

Belo has been arrested and tortured before. On January 9, 1995, he organized a demonstration in Dili in support of a UN-mediated peace talks process on East Timor, which was meeting that day. Most of the protesters were immediately arrested and charged with insulting the government.

"The demonstration started at 9:15 a.m. and by Australian standards, would have been considered innocuous," an Australian eyewitness reported at the time. "The Indonesian response was as though the students were ducks and someone had declared open season. They swarmed out everywhere. Two lines of riot police with shields, five foot long metal poles, helmets and vests, sealed off both ends of the street. Four trucks of soldiers armed with automatic rifles were stationed in the streets behind the university. The students were surrounded and trapped in the university grounds. We were forced back inside our hotel but could still witness some of the events from inside. I saw Jose Antonio Belo being dragged from the university grounds and judging from his bloody and distressed state, he had already been beaten. They took him to a four-wheel drive and threw him inside it. Three military thugs jumped in after him. From the awful noises and the motion of the vehicle, which was rocking back and forth like a cement mixer, I could tell Jose was being savagely beaten inside. We were also able to see the driver, who turned around to throw a few punches himself. I felt physically sick to have seen this."

In later torture sessions, Belo suffered injuries to his stomach and head.

Belo was sentenced to 18 months in prison for this "crime" by an Indonesian court whose jurisdiction he rejected. Other protesters were also jailed. Amnesty International recognized Belo as a prisoner of conscience.

"We cannot accept this judgment on us because we are not Indonesian citizens," Belo wrote in a letter smuggled out of prison to friends in Australia.

"9 January is an international problem because East Timor problems are still an international issue in the United Nations.... Indonesia has no right to judge us because the demonstration I lead was a very PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION. We as demonstrators didn't do any crimes or hits, but when the Indonesian army captured us they tortured us.... We will never recognize integration in our life."

PLEASE SEND APPEALS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

— Ask Indonesian authorities to release Jose Antonio Belo and those arrested with him immediately, and not to mistreat them while they are in custody. Ask also that an international investigation into the events around the death of David Alex be allowed. Finally, ask that Operasi Tuntas be ended and that Indonesia embark on peace talks with the East Timorese resistance.

— Ask Canadian authorities to intervene on behalf of Jose Antonio Belo and his companions, and to support an international investigation into the events around the death of David Alex as well as free access to

East Timor for human rights organizations. Nobel laureate Jose Ramos Horta has requested an international commission of inquiry; Canada should support this request.

After international pressure, Indonesia has promised to allow a UN investigation into the death of David Alex. However, more arrests are being made.

Keep the pressure on!

Indonesian officials:

Commander Resort Military Command (KOREM) 164/Wiradharma (covers East Timor)

Col. Slamet Sidabutar Markas KOREM 164/Wiradharma, Dili East-Timor (Indonesia)

Commander of Special Forces Command Major General Prabowo Panglima Kopassus Markas Besar ABRI Cilangkap Jakarta Timur Indonesia

National Commission on Human Rights Komisi Nasional Hak Asazi Manusia (Komnas HAM) Alex Refialy SH Jalan Dr Antonio de Carvelho Dili, East Timor (via Indonesia)

Indonesian Ambassador to Canada

Benjamin Parwoto 55 Parkdale Ave. Ottawa Ont. K1Y 1E5 phone: (613) 724-1100 fax: (613) 724-1105 email: info@prica.org

Canadian officials:

Minister for Foreign Affairs Lloyd Axworthy House of Commons Ottawa Ont. K1A 0A6 phone: (613) 995-0153 fax: (613) 996-4309, or (613) 947-4442

Canadian Ambassador to Indonesia, Gary Smith

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