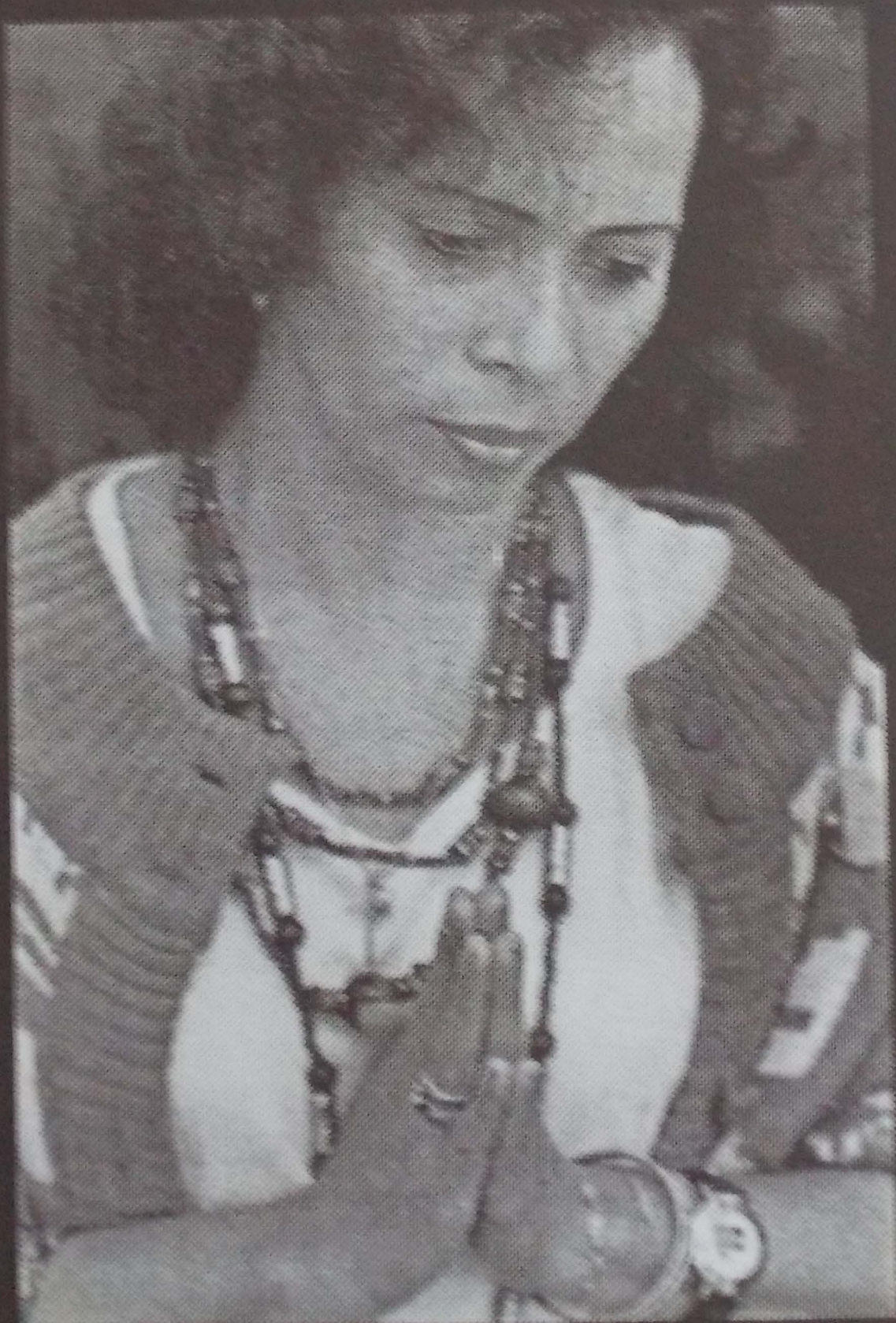


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# **We Must Keep Telling so People Know the Truth**

**The Testimony of Fatima Gusmao,  
A Woman of East Timor**



**East Timor Action Network / San Francisco**



## East Timor:

### 20 years of Genocide, 20 years of Resistance

On December 7, 1975, Indonesia invaded the newly independent Democratic Republic of East Timor. Since that time, with the constant support of the US and in violation of numerous UN resolutions, the Indonesian military has continued to occupy East Timor, inflicting upon it one of the worst tragedies of recent history. In the nearly 20 years since the invasion, the Indonesian military has:

- Killed more than 200,000 Timorese, approximately one third of the 1975 population, the greatest genocide relative to population since the Holocaust.
- Regularly massacred unarmed civilians and demonstrators.
- Raped thousands of women and practiced torture as policy.
- Created an oppressive society based on terror and intimidation.
- Outlawed Timorese languages & displays of traditional culture.
- Monopolized the economy of East Timor and stolen its oil and natural resources.
- Repeatedly attacked and oppressed the Catholic Church, attempting on several occasions to assassinate its Bishop.
- Moved tens of thousands of Indonesians to East Timor and instituted a program of involuntary sterilization in an attempt to make the Timorese a minority in their own land.

For nearly 20 years, the military has been carrying out these policies of genocide. For nearly 20 years, the US government has been supporting Indonesia, selling billions of dollars of weapons and blocking international action on behalf of East Timor. And for nearly 20 years, the people of East Timor have been courageously resisting, willing to sacrifice anything for their dream of independence and freedom.

The reality of East Timor was demonstrated to the world on November 12, 1991, when the Indonesian opened fire on thousands of peaceful demonstrators who had gathered at Santa Cruz massacre to pay their respects to a youth killed in a church by the military two weeks earlier. 271 people, most of them young students, were killed. Witnesses and survivors were then hunted down and killed, resulting in hundreds

(continued on inside back cover)

## "We Must Keep Telling so People Know the Truth"

### The Testimony of Fatima Gusmao, A Woman of East Timor, as told to Michele Turner

"These things I saw with my own eyes."

Before in my life, I never ran. Going to school, I preferred to go late. Before the war I was very lazy. People would not want to talk to me because I gave to any question the shortest answer. They thought I was boring, had no conversation. But after our country was invaded I needed to talk, to explain, to help our people.

The Javanese that came on 7 December 1975 came from the sky, from the sea, in tanks, in planes. So many and every way. Why did they come, so many against just a few of us, if the intention was not to kill us all? If it was not war they should not have done that, they should have come and talked. The sky was black like a big umbrella from the parachutes, we couldn't see anything else, more and more, thousands and thousands of green parachutes. Our Falintil fighters shoot them and some are dead or wounded when they hit the ground. Some drop in front of our house. They look very strange, their hair all shaved with only a little bit left in front. We don't know their language but they call out for things, we think water, food. They look very panicked, surprised, as if they don't know they come to make a war. One who is alive calls to me "minatu, minatu." In Tetun this means servant. I go inside and whisper to Jose that we must lie down and hide because I believe that these foreigners will point their guns and kill us all.

On 8 December for a few hours it goes quiet. Then we hear guns shooting, I think automatic weapons, not just one bullet at a time, and we hear people screaming out, children crying and dogs barking. I said to Jose, "We must run, must get away from here." Between Dili and the mountains fly small planes. I counted eleven of those. At the front and side they have guns and at the back and from the middle they drop bombs. They fire those guns and kill any people they see.

There were many of us running from the soldiers. We crouch and run to hide behind one thing and then the next, houses,



trees, hundreds of people running. The planes shoot and many people bleed. The Javanese were following us, coming after us with guns. It was to kill people, not to stop people fighting, we were not fighting. We didn't even know how to defend ourselves, we had never killed anyone. Sometimes we had to crawl, like a snake wriggling on the ground from one place to hid to another. We stopped on the veranda of a house in our area, in a quieter part. There were others sheltering there. An old man and lady welcomed us to the house, a typical Timorese family house. We stayed there resting about one hour.

I saw Javanese soldiers quickly pass on one side, I think about six of them. I tell this to Jose. He takes my arm and says to run, quickly. We don't wait to be sure. He has only one pistol, he cannot defend all the people there, if he fired he would make trouble for everyone. As we run we hear gunfire. We all panic. We stop the old lady crying out, trying to go back - if they hear her they can kill all of us. She is missing two relatives, the old man and a boy from the house, a grandson I think.

Later when it was quiet that lady wanted to go back. I wanted to go too because I had left packets of sugar and preserved fruit and I thought we should need that, you can eat it quickly, not have to make a fire to cook. How can we run without food? I didn't know if there would be food where we were going. Jose argued with me. He said we should die without that food and I risked dying to get it. Soldiers might be hiding, waiting to see if someone returns. The old lady argued that it would be safe. Jose couldn't stop us so he came too.

When we returned my food was gone. We found the old man and the boy. They were dead where they were sitting next to cooking fire. A bullet had smashed the clay cooking pot. I think they had been shot from the doorway. The old man had a small bullet wound in his chest, the boy had a bigger wound in the middle of his body. Seeing this makes us run and try hard to help our people, because we knew that these foreigners are cruel and come to kill us. Otherwise why would they kill these innocent ones who sit at their cooking fire in their house?

It took us nine days to get from Dili to Aileu where the Fretilin leadership was. There we said we wanted to do something to help our people against these foreigners we saw in Dili, Javanese - we did not call them Indonesians then, they were all Javanese.

I was 18 years old then and Jose was six years older. Before he was our teacher at high school and a close friend. He taught natural science, about plants animals, mountains and rivers, and also history. He was a good teacher and a very good person who cares for others.

There were a lot of pregnant women we had to organize for at Aileu, see they were safe and had enough to eat. Always the neighbours take food to a pregnant woman. They say she must eat a lot and that the baby will like this special food. If you are pregnant and you admire something that a person has, they will not do it straight away, but next time they come to your house they bring that thing. Just quietly, they say you must try, for example, their ring, you must wear it. They say what you admired is something your baby needs. Even if it is a very precious thing, after the birth you keep it. Our people care not so much about things, but about people, that others are happy. This is the traditional way.

Jose and I and some others go to talk to people, before the Javanese come to their area, to warn and invite them to come with us. At that time if we are together and organized we can help each other to keep away from the foreigners. But it is hard to explain that they are in danger to those who were not in Dili or who have not seen what the soldiers do.

In 1976 we went to a small village outside Ainaro, in the mountains, we call it a suco, usually about ten families together. We heard the Javanese would be coming through there. In one house there was a pregnant woman and some children, three or four, and those people did not want to come with us. The man says they have no guns, why would the Indonesians harm them, it is their house, why would they leave it to run away, how would they get food running? He says he is responsible, has to look after the woman who will soon give birth, this is not a time to move. We say of course it is your decision, we cannot stay any longer trying to convince you. We want this lady to have her baby in a secure place. If you think this place is secure we do not, so we will leave you.

We go further up the mountain. It is too late that day to go far. We are among the bushes but we can see the house and the road, a dirt road into that place because around the house the land is all clear, like a farm, they have pigs, chickens, children play there, like fields, yes.

We hear a big helicopter flying over looking. Along the



road we see about 20 Indonesian soldiers coming. We are far away enough to be safe, we see them as small figures. We hear screaming. We think the soldiers frighten the woman and maybe she is having her baby early. The heli-copter goes down and lands there. Out of it they bring things like platforms, stretchers, yes. The soldiers come out and throw, it looks like material, on those. They get into the helicopter and go.

We keep watching, we don't know if more soldiers are still there. A figure comes out, it looks like it is carrying something. It walks slowly, not steady, then sits down. We wait but nothing else happens. It is about an hour since the soldiers go. Some of go to see how those people are. When we get closer we see it is the pregnant woman outside. She is naked. She holds herself, all her stomach is cut open, the baby and everything coming out, the blood has started to dry black. She is just alive and I think she knows us. She tries to speak but no sound comes out. Tears run from her eyes all over her face. We can do nothing for her. We cannot fix a wound like that. We try to take the baby out but it is dead, cut by the knife.

The other people in the house are all dead, cut completely in pieces by very sharp knives. The arms chopped here [shoulder], here [elbow] and here [wrist], heavy strokes falling on them. The small children are broken, torn apart by their legs, like you tear paper. It is so horrible we can hardly believe. Those with us who had not seen them before understand then that the Indonesians come just to kill us all.

These things I saw with my own eyes. They are not a dream or what others tell me, and I can never forget.



**"We must speak for our dead."**

My first baby was born on 12 September 1976. My periods were not regular because of all the disruption, so I don't remember when I first knew I was pregnant. I was lucky at that time, we had a lot of food and I was strong and could run. The first sign of war material in an area and I wanted to go straight away from there. I

was frightened the Indonesians may catch me and cut me also.

My aunt Alexandrina was with me, she delivered many babies, she was very good at this. It was a long birth, a whole day the labour. The water broke the day before so the birth was dry and painful. We had no pain-killers. Jose was there. He was crying. He thought if the baby did not come I would die too. The baby came feet first. My aunt said if his arms were down it would have been easier, but his hands were under his chin, so he was stuck by the arms ten or fifteen minutes, with the cord around his neck. When was born he went pale and dark, pale and dark. We try to massage, rub his heart, but he was too long without oxygen I think. We baptized him Jose. He died after two hours.

When my second baby was born in 1978 we were together in a secure place. We baptized him a Timorese name, Luang Hale. Luang is Jose's brother's name and my name in the bush is "Bi Hale." In Tetun *bi* means lady and *hale* means a special type of big tree which protects people from the sun. If there is a wedding or christening you must find one of these trees to have it under. Also we squash the root of the *hale* tree and use the juice for our long hair, to make it very black and grow quickly.

Having my aunt and her family with us in the mountains was good. She was a fine person, very respected as a midwife and a cook. Her husband Felisberto was old and sick; Jose used to help to carry him. There were their own four children and their little foster child Aurea. At that time I saved three babies. Three mothers who had new babies died, the families asked and I said I would feed those three as well as my own, but that they should feed me. So I fed four babies and not one cries, my milk was good. We try so hard then to keep the children alive. I eat and eat. All the time those families keep cooking for me. The pot was always full, I ate a lot!

I start thinking of it again, when I do this talking to you. I want to pass those moments again, even suffer because that was a part too. I'm talking about feelings. The feeling between people at that time was so good. The co-operation, to save lives, to defeat the famine. That work, after we were captured by the Indonesians, I never found anymore. Here outside many Timorese just work for their own. But there inside I never worked just for my own.

If we have only one pawpaw that is yellow, ready to eat, and 10 or 20 people, we cut for them all. Even a tiny child there has a



right to get a little piece - no discrimination, no difference. We have a women's organization and when we go to farm to work we not only do the job but we support each other - no fighting and the results of that job divided equally. In each group we elect one person in turn to be responsible. Not control us like little children, just organize that we co-operate. We care so much to save each other's life. This is not only my feeling, everybody feels the same way. For example, like me and you, we sit here talking. We hear a shot and recognize it is from the enemy's gun. I say nothing to you, no time to speak. Watching each other we decide in that instant the same, to run together. We hold hands and run straight away. It is a very secure feeling to be with people who feel the same way. Others helped me survive; many like me, who had never lived outside a town, died quickly. I had never been working on a farm. It is not like here, with tractors, sprinklers and machines to help. We had to do everything with our hands. It is very hard work. We do it all not on flat land but on mountains. Grass which grows there can destroy the corn. We had to clear that not just where we plant, but all around there. When it is all clean we have to burn, then make a fence using tree trunks to protect it from pigs or other animals. So much depends on the weather. We have to plant at the right time or the corn may be eaten by ants. When it is ripening also monkeys can come and eat it. So we make a little house there and take turns to watch. Sometimes before it's ready the enemy invade us, but if they don't come we stay.

If we hear a helicopter we have to hide, nobody moving. If they see one person move they call and other planes with guns and bombs come. Many, many of our friends were killed by bombs. When they explode they go in pieces, like metal splinters, and those kill people.

Some ordinary people were fighters; we call them *arma branca*, they defend us but are not Falintil. They use traditional weapons, knives, bow and arrow, spears, one we call *deman*, a long stick with like a knife at the end, used to kill buffalo. Women and men all used those. Old men who could make weapons make as many as they have material for, then teach us how to use them.

In the bush sometime when we are eating, singing and being together, a dog comes bringing the head or arm of some dead person it has found, and we become very sad.

For 5 or 6 months we could stay together and things were calm and we could make food gardens. Then always in the dry season the Indonesians start coming again and we must move. If we can return when the enemy has gone we must be very careful. Anywhere they see we have lived the poison, we think they spray, the water, the plants. We look to see if there are dead animals to know if that place is poisoned.

We were travelling alone, Jose and I, carrying our son Luang Hale, through the Faturliu area. The Indonesians were trying to surround us and we couldn't settle; everyone had to keep moving, so we couldn't plant and we had no food. We had been three days without eating. I tell Jose that if I could drink cold water I could keep going. We find a little stream and go to the end where the water comes out cold from the ground, there it is very pure. I hold the baby and hide while Jose goes first, to test if it is safe, no enemy to catch us. When Jose returns I am so thirsty, so wanting to put my mouth in that cold spring, but I bring some to the baby first. Then I go and stay drinking until I am very full. When I stand relaxed and look further I see a foot.

It is a dead man. Only one foot is out on the land, the body lies back down in the water with arms above the head. He is naked, his body is swollen and being eaten away. It is not one of our people. It is a dead enemy soldier. The water was already inside us, we could change nothing, and I really liked that water, but always since then I have that picture in my mind, in my dreams, of that body in the water spring.

We keep walking away from the enemy. At the end of the day, at that time between light and dark, we are at the top of a mountain where it is flat and there are many bones in the green grass. I think someone has killed a lot of animals and been feasting. Because we were so hungry I was thinking of food. Jose told me not to say such a thing, to look more closely because these were people's bones. The bones were white. Jose said he would see if they were our people's bones. He put a drop of blood on and the bone drank it like a sponge. This is a traditional belief; if the blood had stayed on the outside of the bone it would not belong to us.

When we look more we see many people died there, over a hundred people, all sizes, many children too. We think they were killed all together because of the way they fall. They were not



disturbed, those bones. They lie where they fall, one person on top of another, the baby of the mother's chest or child next to the mother, the hair still under the head, long dark hair of women. We kneel down and pray for those people and ask God that no more of our people have to die like this, especially the children because children are innocent. We ask to understand why the Javanese come to our country to kill us.

It was the wet season and raining, between January and February 1979. Walking and walking we got to a high mountain in the Soibada area called Terras, a good place to hide. There were a lot of big trees, tall grass, rocks and caves, but no food. The only thing was a root, *maek*. Usually we feed it to pigs, who can eat it without harm, but if people eat it without cooking it in a very hot fire, there is a poison which makes the body itchy, the tongue swells up and you can die from not being able to breathe. There were many caves, some as big as this room. We hide there trying to make no noise, talking always very softly, because echoes sound off the rocks. We know the Indonesians are around there, some of our people had seen some. So we didn't go far to find these roots, we found only a few small ones and it was too dangerous to build a big fire to cook them, because the enemy would find us, bomb us.

We were sick, our baby had diarrhoea. We had not eaten for many days. Our Luang Hale came to me and, like this, put his arms around my neck and hugged me and I sit and hold him. It was at a time like now, afternoon. We were inside a cave. I said to Jose that there was something different about the baby, his breathing was like sighing, but I did not move because the baby was holding on around my neck.

Jose knew our son was dying then but I didn't understand, I thought he was just very tired and sick and wanting to sleep. I did not know it was what we call *agonia*, that time between life and dying, that our baby had started to die.

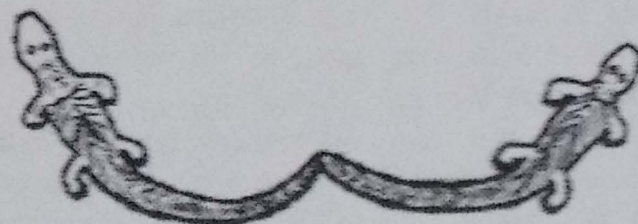
We sit for a long time and slowly I understand he is dead. His arms are locked tight around my neck. It was hard to separate us.

Don't cry, Michele, we just had to accept that separation, there was nothing we could do, no way to revive him. It is like a water pot dropped on the ground, it is gone, you cannot have that water again. But it is hard. Three times it happens to me, three babies die and this one was the hardest because I knew him so well

for eight months.

Many mothers suffer like this. Sometimes it is worse, they rape the mother then kill mother and children together. I do not mind talking to you of these painful things because we must speak for our dead. People tell me to forget, but I cannot forget my children, my friends. We must keep telling so people know the truth.

We carried Luang Hale, wrapped in cloth, to where others were. As they died we tried to bury people. All the babies there died, eight more babies. Some died before and some after our baby. The other people did not want us to bury our child there, they said it was not right that one of their leaders' sons should be buried like this, in a hole without a coffin. I said to them, "Our baby died for the same reason your babies died, for our country's freedom. Their lives were taken for the same thing we are all looking for. The babies all must lie together." For each we made a small place, close together. We join hands and pray, offer the souls of these innocent ones for our country to be free. People stay crying by the grave. We could not console each other.



"So many died at that time, it is not clear why."

After three days we think the Indonesians have gone back because they have not found us, so many of us go in the afternoon to the river to bathe. Jose came with me but he was very sick with malaria and shivering. I was wearing my *taxis* in the water, we always wear this to bathe. All of us were so weak, we had eaten nothing. Jose said not to be long, but we all were liking being in the cool water. On the other side of the river I see bushes shake. I look hard trying to see, I think my eyes are wrong, because I am very sick from hunger. I do not point or cry out, I cover my face, like this, to the others. They see too.

The Fretilin commander is near me and I feel him start to turn. I catch his foot to stop him because I can see now many soldiers. If there were only a few maybe we could get away. I ask



him to stay with us and if we die, we die together, if we run or resist they shoot us all. We see there are many soldiers surrounding us. They have grass and leaves on their uniforms so they can hide, we can see them only when they move. They talk on their radio to say they capture us. They make us walk single file to the caves.

They ask for gold, take any jewelry we have, ear-rings, wedding rings. They walk all over our babies' grave. People who had been in that area for a long time from the beginning of the war had hidden a lot of precious plates, blue china with fine designs of flowers, some big pots and bowls from before the Portuguese time, some Chinese and Italian ones. They bring these out to give to the soldiers, as a gift to save our lives. The soldiers smash them, smash them all in pieces broken on our babies' grave.

The soldiers tell Jose and me that if we want we can come with the others, if not we can stay because we look so weak and ill they think we will die on the way anyway. The others, the Fretilin commandant and others they can see are fighters, they are friendly to them and want to see their weapons, talk to them about fighting. We walk to where the soldiers are camped, on top of a mountain, and arrive about midnight. They are Battalion 700 of green berets. Their camp is of tents, army-green colour, full of war materials. They have food and they give some at first.

Then they were kind only to those they want to keep alive to get information from. Others they didn't care about they gave nothing to, as if telling them to die - some who are just humble people, not important ones. This is very wrong. It is as if there are three of us in this room and I have food and give to you but not to the other one. This is not right.

For a whole week I keep complaining to them, why they don't give food equally to all. What they are doing is to win over some, make them feel more important, like special friends, but it is a game. It is like a cat you see you like. You give it milk so it will come to your house and after a while you catch and keep it, it needs your milk. Or like a fish - you throw your line with food into the sea, it eats, but inside is the hook. It is not done with the heart, this giving. It is so people relax and tell things.

I say to the Javanese how their leader said that they were the same colour as us, their land was part of our land, how they are our family and all this they say at first. Then why do they give food to

some and not to others? When they found us we were all together and we shared everything.

They ask me who are my family because I have whiter skin and I tell them my father is Portuguese but I am Timorese, born here, and these are my people. By then they know from others that we are important. Jose was the responsible delegate for the 700 people in our sector. He was not Falintil, a fighter, but organized and relayed messages from the Fretilin leadership to our people, and took our people's needs and wishes back.

Late in the night they take us for the first interview. Slowly those captured with us had been taken in the night and some disappear. We never see them again and we know it will be our turn and we expect to die. They ask us who wants to be first to die. I have thought of this and I say to kill me first. They ask me why. I tell them I want Jose to see me die. He knows then that after he is dead they cannot use me as their prostitute, pass me from hand to hand. I will be dead and what they do to my body then I don't care, but Jose, before he closes his eyes, I want him to see that I am dead.

But they do not harm us then. Jose and I are very lucky to be together still and alive. Always I try to stand beside him, not let them separate us. In our culture before people marry they have to take a long time to get to know each other. They have not just to like each other, but speak openly if they do not like something, not store it up in the heart and hold that against the other - those will not get on in marriage. Jose and I, three years we know each other as friends. We know we can be friends and more than friends. So much in Australia I see it happen that people do not take time, they try one person then another.

We are taken to Turiscai. A Chinese who lives there comes. When my father was administrator in that area he helped this man and he wants to help me in return. He says I am in danger, the Indonesians are tired of me because I complain. He advises us that if the Indonesians send to get us in the night, to give some reason and not go. He gives us food, this kind man. He has to seem to be helping all of us so that the Indonesians do not notice he comes to warn me.

In the night a Timorese helping the Indonesians comes and asks us to see a new place we could stay. I say I feel very weak and tired and my feet are sore and I am so sorry but we cannot come then. He says people can help carry me, that there is dinner ready there



with important people. It is 12 o'clock at night! I tell him we are not hungry now, we are very tired, tomorrow to come for us about midday.

The military-controlled house they want to take us to is very high up and covered in cloud in the morning - you cannot see properly. We are staying in the Chinese part of Turiscai, which is lower down. The Chinese man who warned us has a street stall outside and when they come next day to take us he nods to me that it is safe and we go. Later he brings us food and tells us when we feel strong to ask to be taken to Dili where Jose has family, as we will be safer there.

I go to the military commander and ask if there is space in any transports going to Dili because we have family there and no relatives here. He says we can go in a helicopter. I didn't want this because I have heard they drop people from helicopters. I say that is too much trouble for them, any place in a truck is good enough.

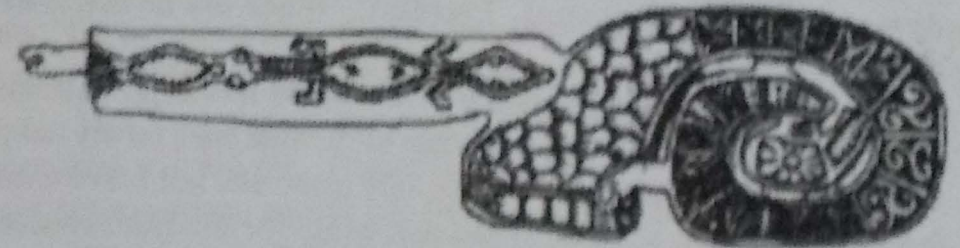
In Dili, we stay with Jose's family. While we were in the bush they tortured one brother-in-law. He had no nails left on his feet or hands, they cut pieces off his ears, and his body is full of marks, and because they hit him so much he is deaf in both ears. In two weeks some Red Berets soldiers come the house to get us. Those ones kill easily, many taken by them disappear, but we were lucky, we were out to dinner when they came.

A Timorese brings me my aunt Alexandrina's watch. He knows how I love her, she cared for me when I was a child. We were not together in the bush at the end and this man had to work for the Indonesians and witnessed what happened to my aunt. He told us that after they were captured, a collaborator invited the whole family to dinner. They were still weak from their time in the bush, but they cleaned the children up and went. They thought as they had not fought with guns, only helped with medicine in the bush, they might be offered better conditions. But when they got to the place, they were shown out the back where their graves had already been dug.

Alexandrina asked for her husband to be killed first, to save him from the sight, then the children, and herself last so that she could be sure the girls were not raped. He said she acted with great dignity. They were all killed, yes, shot. Felisberto, Alexandrina and all five children, the youngest six years old. People thought they

died because their eldest daughter married Nicolau Lobato's brother Rogerio, but so many died at that time, it is not clear why. Later Alexandrina's watch was stolen; I do not have it now.

Some Indonesians officials who were not troops came to visit us. They are very polite, ask us what we did before, say we can have good jobs if we like, if we need help just come and ask them, they are our friends. We are polite, we say thank you very much and they go away. Next they send a Timorese to us who knew us from before the war. He was at school with me but he was older. We know from friends that he collaborates and not to trust him. He asks me if I want to join my parents outside, that he can help us get the papers. I reply that I am grown up and married now and my husband is here with me, why would I want to go to my parents? If I had said I wanted to leave he would know that I might get outside and tell what happened in the mountains. After two or three months we start to get better and we think we are safe, they didn't kill us. But they were still watching us always, they knew we were Fretilin.



**"If that baby was not a Fretilin's he would not die."**

My third baby was born in Dili on 26 May 1980. The baby when he was born was all right. Jose's family were all so happy having a baby born safe in the hospital. The doctor was Indonesian, a man, there were three Indonesian nurses, women. At night only one was in charge. The doctor said to be safe the baby must stay at night with the nurses. If Fretilin attacked the mothers might run in confusion, but the baby would be secure.

At night after I feed the baby they take it to sleep with them. I cannot relax. Every time I hear a baby cry I think it is mine. For two nights I do not sleep properly. The third night they give me an injection to make me sleep. I feed the baby and the nurse takes him away. After a few minutes I sleep a very deep sleep, I didn't hear anyone cry.

When I wake it is already 8 o'clock in the morning. The



young girl, a relative of Jose, who is there to look after me, is sitting on the end of the bed. Before I went to sleep I remember seeing her just about to sit down there. Now in the morning she doesn't greet me, doesn't speak. I think she is upset that I look untidy or dirty. There wasn't enough water there, and often not hot water, so I couldn't have a long wash with hot water after the birth as we usually do. Quickly I brush my hair and tell her to bring me coffee because I am going to see the baby. When I stand up she stands in front of me and says, "Oh sister, what you need I will help, don't get up." Then she starts to cry. I tell her not to be silly, to get me coffee.

Then a nun comes, a friend of the family we know well. She comes to me and straightaway hugs me, but she cannot speak. I look at her face and tell her please not to make me suffer, if she has something to tell me to say it. I think maybe they have taken Jose. She says, "If that baby was not a Fretilin's he would not die."

I think she is talking about those who died in the bush. I say, "Yes, yes. Come with me to see the baby." She says, "Your baby's dead." I say, "Which baby?" She says, "The one born here three days ago." I lose my control. I scream, "When did he die, why didn't they wake me?"

She said he died at two o'clock in the morning. All the lights went off in the hospital and when they came back on my baby was dead. They didn't wake me but they came and got his clothes from under my bed. My mother had sent things for him from outside through Mgr Lopes and they came and took from those what fitted best. The baby when I see him is all purple, his body. When Jose come that morning to see us the nurse gives our son's body to him. We question but none answers us, only the nun. When the nurse is gone, she cries a lot and repeats what she said, that if he wasn't a Fretilin's son he would not die.

I did not suspect they could harm my baby, he is innocent, just born. He cannot talk or say he is Fretilin.

He died on 29 May. My third baby lived three days. He was baptized Jose too. The nun came in the night to baptize him when he died. She wanted to wake me but they said I was sleeping too deeply. The other mothers are very upset. When it is time and they bring all the babies to the mothers to feed, they watch me and say how sad, we feed our baby and hers is gone.

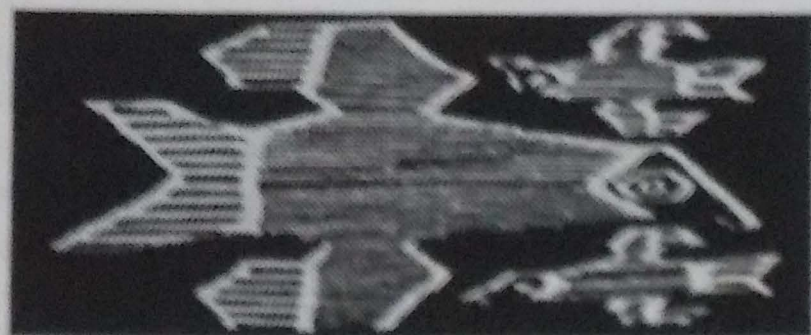
I stay four more days in the hospital. I am very sick. They

give me tablets to calm me. They give me two injections before I go home, one each side at the top of my leg. Where they inject both sides swell up. It starts small and itchy, small as a pea, then slowly bigger and I get a fever. I cannot sleep. The lumps are hot, itchy and painful and I become very skinny. They swell as big as an orange each side. My legs tremble, very weak. I cannot walk or do anything, always with high fever and no rest. The pain is there all the time, not only when I try to walk. The pain makes me mad.

I am screaming my mother's name, my father's name for them to help me, all night sometimes. Asking why they kill my aunt, a woman with grey hair who did only good to everyone, and all her children. I talk about people who died in the bush. I was like a mad woman, talking, talking and screaming. I didn't care about myself anymore. In Jose's family's house, people outside can hear me. People say to be careful, not to talk like this, otherwise they can shoot you. People around me all cry, they tell me please, please don't do it. They cook for me, Chinese people and all the neighbours. They try to do everything for me but I can never be happy. I say no, no, I have to talk, if I don't talk I die. Then I say please, please I want to die, I'd rather die than see the suffering. I tell the troops walking in front of the house, "Do not come here, if you come here one of us has to die, you or me!" But they wouldn't kill me, they let me suffer. For one year I am like this.

Mgr Lopes gave me absolution. People think I will die or the Indonesians will kill me. Timorese who heard me then believe I died. They do not believe when people tell them I am here alive.

We go many times to the hospital, the Indonesian military doctor. I tell them they did this to me, they have to cure me. But the doctor says he cannot help me. After a year I ask a Timorese nurse please to cut me, open these lumps. He has pity for me. He has no anaesthetic, he cuts me alive. Inside was only water and blood. He cut away the loose skin. Now the scars are there, I show you. We put on a black paste every day, a traditional medicine, to cure the skin. In about three months I can walk everywhere, and I start to be normal. I become pregnant with Hoe, our fourth son who lived





**"It is very hard to live in our country."**

Then in 1981 they tried to take Jose. Soldiers came to the place he worked, a small factory. His boss there said they cannot take anyone from his place without a proper reason. They say they need Jose to help them. The boss says if they need help he will help them, what do they need help with? He won't let them take Jose and they go.

When they know they can't take him from his work, because the boss knows important people, they come to our home. A Timorese we know comes with three soldiers who wear the green berets, military police I think. I said to them, "You take Jose with you now but I want to see him back again alive with no marks on his body or there will be a lot of trouble for all of us." I say this very importantly and they look worried but I don't know why - I am a woman who could not kill an ant.

I wait three days and I cannot sleep, cannot relax. I go to Jose's work. It is the first time his boss sees me there and he looks at my face and knows something is very wrong. He did not know they had taken Jose. He tells me he will find him, to stay there and relax.

After a while he returns with Jose and three Red Beret soldiers. He says to find him he went straight to the top. I want to ask Jose how he is, if he is hurt, but he makes to me a sign like this: no, be quiet. He means, "I am alive, it is enough, do not complicate matters." His boss does not see this. I am calm and very sweet, saying thank you to that man and that God will bless him. I think they hurt Jose, yes, but he will not talk of it, not to disturb me.

Twice before I get out from Timor they take me for interrogation in Dili. The first time in Santaiho, it used to be a warehouse. They take you there without warning, just pick you up. They have a list of names - today we talk to these ten people, later other ones. They keep me for three days. Afterwards I have to take a paper and report every week to say I have been good, not contacting Fretilin. They do not abuse me, but I hear and see what they do to others.

The make people sit on a chair with the front of the chair on their own toes. It is mad, yes. The soldiers urinate in the food then mix it up for the person to eat. They use the electric shock and they use an electric machine, they call it *mola*. It is in a very small room,

enough space for one person sitting on a chair nowhere to move to. The *mola* is like metal elastic, like on the telephone in a phone box here, about as long as an arm. On the end is a black rubber ball. They shut the person in with the *mola* and turn it on and it hits around and around in that small space. They put people in for a time, take them out, tell them last time you lied, now you talk to us again, then put them in again with the *mola*. I have seen it, yes, they show it to me and tell me if I am not good they will put me there.

The second time they take me I was pregnant, soon to give birth to our fourth son. The interpreter, a Timorese, advises me to give short true answers and behind pay a bribe, not to make long answers or complain as it will take longer and the one to suffer will be me. They ask how I feel about things now, better than before, I answer yes, better than before; am I happy, yes I am happy. They mix drinks, it smells like wine, you have to drink it, it makes me feel very dizzy.

I did not want another child born in Timor. My parents outside send money, it cost \$7000 to get out to Jakarta to have him there. He was born 23 January 1982 and still lives. When I left Dili it was very sad. I go close to my friend's ears and say, "I have to leave."

Our son Luang Hale died but those other three I fed with him are still alive; they were not with us at Terras. They are three sweet little boys with dark skin like Jose. They call me mother. Before we leave Timor their families bring me fruit and cooked food. Their message to me was to keep talking; outside you can talk, here we are always in danger.

When we left and first spoke outside Jose's family suffered. His brother Caetano was badly beaten. His spleen was enlarged from malaria and the beating damaged it. They let him go but he died later at home. Jose's father had died in 1977 from illness in the bush, but in 1985 they arrested his mother and interrogated her and were going to kill her, but someone stopped it. Now that they know we can get bad publicity for them outside, his family is a little safer.

Here in Darwin I saved a baby. It was raining and we were driving and an old lady carrying a baby was trying to stop cars, but they were going past. I tell Jose to stop and when I got out to let her sit in the front I saw the lady was so upset and the baby was very white and limp, about 8 months like my second baby. Jose drives



quickly to the hospital. There the nurse looks at the baby and takes her straight to emergency. They put oxygen, they put tubes up her nose, they push her chest.

All the time I am crying, "Please God to save this baby." The doctor comes running, he thinks I am the mother, I am so upset. The baby goes pink, then white, pink then white and then she starts to scream and scream. They say this is a good sign, she will be all right. We all hug one another. The doctor says 10 more minutes and she would be dead, that beautiful little girl. I am thinking of my dead babies. Oh I want her, that pretty girl. I tell them if no one wants to I will look after her.

The old lady was the grandmother. The mother was separated from her husband. The grandmother said she loved the girl very much, but I see her, she is grown big now. She is called Catherine. I see her with her grandmother and she calls me mother too because I helped to save her.

I was so happy I could help save one more baby. My babies I could not save, there was nothing I could do! I appeal to Australian women, to mothers. How can people tell me to be quiet, to forget? If someone invaded Australia and you saw your children suffer would you be quiet?

Sometimes I sit and think of ways I could give my life to stop the suffering, of the best ways to use what I can give, only one life. If I could get a plane or a helicopter and go to destroy one prison, to let some of my people escape or destroy war materials. This is only wishing. I could not do these things.

I believe we deserve our independence, our freedom. Why can some people have this and us not? We can live at peace doing our job in Australia, why can't we do this in our own country? We are not like to Indonesians, we have a different culture, a different language.

Inside our land Timorese all know each other. We talk with our eyes - they say you are one suffering like me. If you go there you will know, their eyes will tell you they are not happy. We have all lost too many of our family. When we are together in church we pray for each other. It is very hard to live in our country.



This testimony is taken from the book *Telling, East Timorese Personal Testimonies*, by Michele Turner. Ms. Gusman appears briefly with her husband in the film *Death of a Nation: The East Timor Conspiracy*, by John Pilger. She and her family live in Darwin, Australia.

Notes: Falintil is the name of the armed resistance of East Timor. Fretilin was the political party which won local elections in early 1975 and the brief Indonesian-instigated civil war in August 1975, and which subsequently declared East Timor's independence. Following the invasion, it led the resistance to the Indonesian occupation. It is now part of the National Council of Maubere Resistance, the umbrella organization for all political parties struggling for the independence of East Timor. Nicolau Lobato was the first leader of Fretilin. Widely revered by the Timorese, his capture was a top priority for the Indonesians. He was killed in combat in 1978. Fatima Gusman's account of the infanticide of her third child is substantiated both by the testimony of other refugees, who insist that hundreds of babies were killed during the 1980's, and an Indonesian doctor, who discovered the systematic poisoning of Timorese infants and went public with what he knew in 1989.





Other resources available from the  
East Timor Action Network

- *In Cold Blood: The Massacre of East Timor*. 55-minute British video including the Nov. 12, 1991 massacre. (\$25)
- *Indonesia's Forgotten War: The Hidden History of East Timor*. By John Taylor. The most comprehensive and recent book on East Timor. (\$20)
- *Telling: East Timor Personal Testimonies*. By Michele Turner. A collection of testimonies of East Timorese from World War Two to the present.. (\$20)
- *Massacre: The Story of East Timor*. 40 minute audiotape of award-winning radio documentary by Amy Goodman and Allan Nairn, who were present at the Santa Cruz massacre. (\$10)
- Special March 1994 issue of the *New Internationalist* magazine devoted to East Timor. Excellent and up to date survey of the major issues involved. (\$3.50)
- "Free East Timor" button with photo of young Timorese girl. (\$1.25)
- T-shirts: "East Timor: Indonesia's Killing Field," or "To Resist is to Win" with photo. Both say "End US Support of Indonesian Genocide" on back. Specify M, L, or XL. (\$13)
- Postcards with photos of Timorese life. (\$1 for set of six)
- "Timor Leste/East Timor" cast metal key chains made by Timorese refugees in Portugal. (\$5)
- East Timor Documents compilation. Compilation of press reports on East Timor from around the world. (\$10 per bi-monthly issue)
- There are a number of Internet resources available on East Timor. Ask for addresses and for information on how to subscribe to the East Timor electronic mailing list.

Please add 20% for postage and order from National office.

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more deaths. Videotape of the massacre was seen around the globe and focused the world's spotlight on the continuing tragedy of East Timor.

In the summer of 1994, the bishop of East Timor stated that, "It has never been worse here. No one can speak. No one can demonstrate. People disappear. East Timor is an island of total fear and terror. We ask the world to understand this and never forget that we are here, struggling for life everyday." Since that time, the oppression of the Timorese people has increased further. Recently, military-sponsored death squads have begun operation in East Timor, killing and abducting scores of people in just the first few months of 1995.

The East Timor Action Network (ETAN) was formed immediately following the Santa Cruz Massacre, and is a decentralized, grassroots, national coalition with local chapters throughout the US. Along with an increasing number of solidarity and human rights groups around the world, ETAN has helped to greatly expand the awareness of the tragedy of East Timor. With the determined struggle of the Timorese continuing to grab headlines, there is currently unprecedented support for East Timor.

But there is still much to be done. The Indonesian generals who oppress East Timor (and Indonesia as well) still refuse to give East Timor its freedom and will continue to do so until international pressure forces them to. Please contact ETAN to find out how you can learn more about East Timor and, more importantly, how you can help the Timorese achieve their goal of a free and independent East Timor.

Since the Indonesian invasion of 1975, the people of East Timor have suffered one of the worst catastrophes of this terrible century. The East Timor Action Network has succeeded in bringing this awful tragedy to the awareness of the public and Congress. Its work has made it possible to hope that the people of East Timor may at last enjoy the right of self-determination for which they have struggled with such courage and dedication.

-- Noam Chomsky --



**"Inside our land Timorese all know each other.  
We talk with our eyes - they say you are one  
suffering like me. If you go there you will know,  
their eyes will tell you they are not happy. It is  
very hard to live in our country."  
-- Fatima Gusmao --**

On December 7, 1975, Indonesia, with US support, invaded the newly independent nation of East Timor. Since that time, more than 200,000 Timorese have been killed. This amounts to one third of the population, the greatest genocide relative to population since the Holocaust. This is the testimony of Fatima Gusmao, a woman who survived in East Timor for seven years before escaping to Australia. It is a powerful and moving account both of life under the Indonesian occupation and of the determination of the East Timorese to resist. Her story is taken from the book *Telling: East Timor Personal Testimonies* by Michele Turner (Kensington, NSW, Australia: New South Wales University Press, 1992).



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