



TLAVA

Timor-Leste Armed Violence Assessment

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE: 17 JUNE 2009 10:00 DILI TIME

Electoral violence shadows Timorese politics: new report

— Victimization, property damage, and displacement documented —

DILI 17 JUNE — Election-related violence has shadowed Timorese politics since 1999 and exhibits identifiable characteristics, perpetrators, and effects, according to a new report released today. The analysis provides the first known retrospective review of election-related violence in Timor-Leste as well as the first review of electoral violence prevention efforts conducted to date.

Because of the lack of routine, standardized violence monitoring during all election phases (voter registration, campaigning, balloting, results) the report strongly advises caution in making broad generalizations. Nevertheless, ‘*Electoral violence in Timor-Leste: mapping incidents and responses*,’ launched today in Dili by ActionAid Australia (formerly Austcare) and the Small Arms Survey, provides a number of tentative findings that can inform future analysis and violence prevention efforts:

- In the six elections since 1999, electoral violence was by far the most serious during the Popular Consultation, followed by the 2007 parliamentary election. Far fewer incidents were reported during the 2001 Constituent Assembly election, the 2002 presidential election, the 2004–05 *sucu* elections, and the 2007 presidential election, though claims of intimidation and sporadic violence were recorded.
- In both the 1999 Popular Consultation and the 2007 parliamentary election, reported incidents of violence peaked in the campaigning period, dropped near Election Day, and rose again during the period when results were announced.
- Electoral violence can generate far-reaching effects extending beyond the violent victimization of individuals. For example, the 2007 parliamentary elections were accompanied by widespread property damage and displacement.
- Timorese political party supporters, and to some extent their leaders, were frequently identified as the primary instigators of electoral violence.
- A major institutional hindrance to improved electoral violence prevention is the delay in articulating a legal framework to regulate electoral processes, due to lingering political differences.
- A range of public, private, and civil society efforts, both formal and informal, have been undertaken to address electoral violence since 1999. These include interventions to foster social cohesion, strengthen security and oversight of elections, and improve electoral dispute resolution. Ultimately, long-term efforts are needed that combine

state and non-state resources to address individual and community grievances and to diminish the incentives for recourse to violence.

The report is the third in a series of *Issue Briefs* released by the Timor-Leste Armed Violence Assessment (TLAVA), an independent research project overseen by the international NGO ActionAid Australia (formerly Austcare) and the Geneva-based Small Arms Survey. TLAVA provides valid evidence-based policy options to reduce armed violence for the Timorese government, civil society, and their partners. TLAVA is supported by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).

The report is available in English and Tetum from www.timor-leste-violence.org.

For interview or further information, please contact:

James Scambary
Timor-Leste Armed Violence Assessment Representative (Dili)
+670 7306564
jamescambary@yahoo.com.au

Mark Chenery
Communications Specialist
ActionAid Australia (Sydney)
+61 (0)2 9565 9106
mark.chenery@actionaid.org

Emile LeBrun
Small Arms Survey (Geneva)
+31 6 4848 2004
emile.lebrun@smallarmssurvey.org

- # # # -