

MEDIA RELEASE

# Human Rights Groups Call for End to Farcical Commission

Thursday 11 October 2007, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 24 May 2007).

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In an open letter [\[1\]](#) to the presidents of Indonesia and Timor-Leste, a worldwide coalition of three dozen human rights organizations led by groups from Indonesia and Timor-Leste have called on President Yudhoyono and President Ramos-Horta to close the bilateral Commission for Truth and Friendship (CTF).

The letter says, "It is obvious from its mandate and its performance that the CTF is not a credible mechanism to seek justice or even truth regarding events in Timor-Leste in 1999, let alone from 1975 to 1999." The full text of the letter is available in English [\[2\]](#), Bahasa Indonesia [\[3\]](#) and Tetum [\[4\]](#).

"The CTF cannot satisfy the pressing need for justice from victims, victims' families, and the entire population of Timor-Leste," said signer Yasinta Lujina of La'o Hamutuk, a Timor-Leste-based organization. "Without justice, the wounds of the past cannot heal and a lack of respect for the rule of law will continue to destabilise Timor-Leste."

"The creation of the CTF was an act of political expediency that was doomed from the beginning", said Dr Mark Byrne, of the Australian Coalition for Transitional Justice in East Timor. "Its terms of reference permit it to recommend amnesties for the perpetrators of the most brutal human rights violations."

According to Byrne, "What we feared from the outset has happened. The public hearings have become forums for alleged perpetrators to attempt to rewrite history by blaming the victims and the United Nations. Instead of telling the truth — which is by now well established — members of the Indonesian Government and military and East Timorese militia leaders have blamed the UN, Australia and the East Timorese themselves for the violence."

The signatories to the letter are calling on the two presidents to close the CTF. The letter

recommends that support be given to reconstituting the “Special Panels for Serious Crimes” in Dili with effective authority to arrest and try perpetrators of serious crimes committed in Timor-Leste during the Indonesian occupation, regardless of where they currently reside. “If that is not possible, we will continue to call for the establishment of an international criminal tribunal,” the letter says. The Special Panels ran from 2002-2005 but ended their work before it was completed due to a lack of cooperation from Indonesia and inadequate support from the UN.

The letter also calls for “discussion in both national parliaments on how to implement the recommendations in Chega!, the Report of the Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR).” [5] The CAVR criticized the establishment of the CTF and called for an international tribunal should other efforts at justice continue to fail.

The lack of “a credible mechanism to hold accountable high-level perpetrators of crimes against humanity in Timor-Leste... which will continue to hamper the growth of democracy and respect for the rule of law in both Indonesia and Timor-Leste,” the letter says.

The letter is timed to coincide with recent the inauguration of José Ramos-Horta as the new President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. Signers include human rights groups from Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Australia, New Zealand, Asia, United States, and Europe

The CTF began in 2005 as an effort to deflect a United Nations report [6] call for Indonesia to be given six months to prosecute those within its jurisdiction accused of serious crimes during the 1999 independence referendum in Timor-Leste. The CTF was intended to “establish the conclusive truth in regard to the events prior to and immediately after” the referendum.

The CTF was originally intended to last for one year, but its mandate was extended in 2006. The commissioners — five each from Indonesia and Timor-Leste — have recently asked for another year to complete their work. However, the Commission has been beset by problems, including: the widespread perception that it lacks legitimacy; serious deficiencies in the standards of its public hearings, including no clear procedure for reconciling conflicting versions of the truth and a lack of clarity and transparency about its processes.

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## **NGOS call for closure of CTF**

### **INDONESIA-EAST TIMOR: NGOS CALL FOR CLOSURE OF ‘NOT-CREDIBLE’ TRUTH COMMISSION**

25-May-07 15:06

Jakarta, 25 May (AKI) - A worldwide coalition of some three dozen human rights groups have called on Indonesia’s President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and East Timor’s President Jose Ramos-Horta to close the bilateral Commission for Truth and Friendship (CTF), because it is “not-credible.” “It is obvious from its mandate and its performance that the CTF is not a credible mechanism to seek justice or even truth regarding events in East Timor in 1999, let alone from 1975 to 1999,” the coalition said in an open letter.

“The creation of the CTF was an act of political expediency that was doomed from the beginning”,

said Dr Mark Byrne, of the Australian Coalition for Transitional Justice in East Timor. "Its terms of reference permit it to recommend amnesties for the perpetrators of the most brutal human rights violations."

"The public hearings have become forums for alleged perpetrators to attempt to rewrite history by blaming the victims and the United Nations," he added.

The letter recommends instead that support be given to reconstituting the Special Panels for Serious Crimes in Dili with effective authority to arrest and try perpetrators of serious crimes committed in East Timor during the Indonesian occupation, regardless of where they currently reside.

The Special Panels ran from 2002-2005 but ended their work before it was completed due to a lack of cooperation from Indonesia and inadequate support from the UN.

The CTF began in 2005 as an effort to deflect a United Nations report call for Indonesia to be given six months to prosecute those within its jurisdiction accused of serious crimes during East Timor's 1999 independence referendum.

The CTF was originally intended to last for one year, but its mandate was extended in 2006. The commissioners, five each from Indonesia and East Timor, have recently asked for another year to complete their work.

However, the Commission has been beset by problems, including the widespread perception that it lacks legitimacy; serious deficiencies in the standards of its public hearings, including no clear procedure for reconciling conflicting versions of the truth and a lack of clarity and transparency about its processes.

Over 1400 people are believed to have been killed by Indonesian Military-backed militias after the 1999 referendum, which ended a 24-year occupation. Militia leader Eurico Guterres, the only person jailed in Indonesia for the violence, is serving a 10-year sentence at a Jakarta prison.

(Fsc/Aki)

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## Footnotes

[1] <http://www.etan.org/news/2007/05ctf.htm> On ESSF: [Open letter to the presidents of the Republics of Indonesia and Timor-Leste regarding the Indonesia-Timor Leste Commission of Truth and Friendship](#)

[2] <http://www.etan.org/etanpdf/2007/CT...>

[3] <http://www.etan.org/news/2007/05ctf...>

[4] <http://www.etan.org/etanpdf/2007/CT...>

[5] <http://www.etan.org/news/2006/cavr.htm>

[6] <http://www.etan.org/etanpdf/pdf3/N0...>