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Timor-Leste: Timorese present 10-metre-long petition to Australian embassy protesting prosecution of whistleblowers

Wednesday 19 September 2018, by [BOYLE Peter](#) (Date first published: 14 September 2018).

Activists from the Movement Against the Occupation of the Timor Sea (MKOTT) delivered a 10-metre-long banner covered with the signatures of 1300 Timorese to the Australian embassy in Dili on September 16.



Timorese present a 10-metre-long petition to the Australian embassy in Dili on September 16. Photo courtesy of MKOTT.

The signatures were collected in protest at the Australian government's persecution of former spy Witness K and his lawyer Bernard Collaery, for allegedly blowing the whistle on the 2004 bugging of Timor-Leste Cabinet offices by the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS).

The prosecution of the two whistleblowers began on September 12 in a Magistrates court in Canberra, amid protests across Australia.

According to MKOTT activist Tomas Freitas, most of the signatures on the petition banner were collected in just three days from students and workers on one university campus, the National University of East Timor (UNTL).

"And just this morning, as we rallied outside the Australian embassy" Freitas told Green Left Weekly, "all the staff from Timor GAP Oil Company, which is our own state oil company, joined us and signed the petition as well.

"MKOTT plans to gather more signatures from other universities and also from veterans from the resistance to Indonesian occupation from 12 other municipalities.

"We have a target of collecting at least 50,000 signatures before the next court hearing on October 28," Freitas said. "We collected 1,300 signatures in just three days, so there will be many more collected in 30 days."

MKOTT has called on the Australian court to throw out the charges against Collaery and Witness K.

MKOTT has also come out in support of the initiative by Australian independent MP Andrew Wilkie and crossbench senators Nick McKim (The Greens), Rex Patrick (Centre Alliance) and Tim Storer (Independent SA) requesting an investigation into the ASIO espionage case.

At the same time, MKOTT is calling for an investigation into former Australian foreign minister Alexander Downer (who currently sits on the Advisory Board of Woodside Petroleum, a company with major interest in the Timor Sea) for his role in the scandalous act of espionage against Timor-Leste that was carried out during his time in office.

Peter Boyle

P.S.

• Greenleft, Issue 1196, September 14, 2018:

<https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/timorese-present-10m-long-petition-australian-embassy-protesting-prosecution-whistleblowers>