



Timor-Leste: New Government should perform its responsibility as duty bearer to promote and protect human rights in the country

(Jakarta/Dili/Bangkok, 28 May 2018) - The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), together with its Timorese members, the Judicial System Monitoring Program (JSMP) and the Association for Law, Human Rights and Development (HAK Association) call on the Alliance for Change and Progress, previously known as the Parliamentary Majority Alliance or AMP, as the winning party of the elections held in May 2018, to fulfil its commitment to promote and protect human rights in the country.

After experiencing a political gridlock that led to the dissolution of the National Parliament in early 2018,^[1] Timor-Leste now has a new Government. As announced by the Supreme Court today, on 28 May 2018, the Alliance for Change and Progress, a coalition of the National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction Party (CNRT), the People's Liberation Party (PLP), and the Kmanek Haburas Unidade Nasional Timor Oan (KHUNTO), won the elections of Timor-Leste on 12 May 2018 with 49.6 percent of the national vote, which gained them 34 of 65 seats in the new Parliament. The coalition changed the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor / Frente Revolucionaria de Timor-Leste (Fretilin) position from being the winner of the 2017 elections, to second place in the present elections with 34.2 per cent of the total vote. With only minor clashes between supporters reported during the campaign period, the elections were held peacefully.

^[1] <https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=26261>

While celebrating the manifestation of the people's voice in Timor-Leste, we would like to remind the newly elected Government of our concerns about the unacceptable situation of human rights in the country. Research on the impact of new elections in Timor-Leste conducted by FORUM-ASIA in early May revealed trends of shrinking civic space, curtailing of political rights, and a weakening judicial system in the country. As the result of political gridlock in 2017, threats against journalists and human rights defenders, such as those who defend land rights, rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) people, women, and children remained unaddressed. There is also no progress made in regards to addressing past human rights violations, such as cases involving members of militia that are still pending in Court and disappearance cases which happened during the war.^{[2][33]}

Reflecting on this situation, we encourage the new Government to restore the rule of law and democracy in the country, as well as seriously put efforts into promoting and protecting the rights of the people.

We call on the newly elected Government to prioritise fundamental freedoms, civic space, and human rights in the country. We urge the Government to address problems experienced by vulnerable groups, such as women, children, and the LGBTI community, and to show commitment to addressing past human rights violations that have remained unsolved. The Government also needs to implement recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review of 2016, and integrate them in the Government's national development

² FORUM-ASIA, 2018. Mission Report – The Impact of New Round of Elections To Civil Society in Timor-Leste <https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=26321>

³ UNTAET Regulation 2000/15 on the Establishment of Panels with exclusive jurisdiction over serious criminal offences, Article 5. The pending cases include Case No. 273/C.Ord/2011/TDD (against members of *Aileu Hametin Integrasaun* militia, and two cases against members of *Besi Merah Putih* militia: No. 282/C.Ord/2012/TDD2 and No.707/C.Ord/2012/TDD.

programme, such as those that are related to poverty and the promotion of gender equality.

Lastly, we emphasise the importance of respecting the votes and decisions made by the people of Timor-Leste. All parties should put aside their political agendas, and collaborate in order to bring back and maintain stability in the country. In relation to this, we also encourage the new Government to establish an enabling environment for all actors, including civil society organisations to take part in policy formulation and decision-making processes.

For further information, please contact:

– East Asia and ASEAN Programme, FORUM-ASIA, ea-asean@forum-asia.org

– Judicial System Monitoring Program, JSMP luís@jsmp.tl

– Human Rights and Justice, HAK manuel.maklerok@gmail.com