



Press Release
7 August 2018

Civil Society Advocacy Group on Incest meets with the Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion

On 7 August 2018 the Civil Society Advocacy Group on Incest (Advocacy Group) met with the Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion, Her Excellency Ms. Maria José da Fonseca de Jesus, at the Obrigado Barracks in Dili, to present its thoughts and concerns relating to cases of incest in Timor-Leste.

This meeting was aimed at presenting a submission from JSMP and ALFeLa on "Improving the Penal Code to better protect women and children".

"The Advocacy Group met with Her Excellency the Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion to present data, efforts and concerns about cases of incest that are still increasing and explore alternatives to respond to this situation by amending the Penal Code", said the Executive Director of JSMP, Luis de Oliveira Sampaio.

In this meeting representative from each organization involved in the advocacy group discussed the facts and reality based on the experiences of each institution in providing assistance to victims in cases of incest. JSMP presented its findings from 2012 to May 2018 with 49 cases of incest being registered, ALFeLA spoke about its legal aid work in helping victims of incest, PRADET spoke about the challenges and ideas about the importance of criminalising incest and Fokupers also outlined the need to criminalise incest based on its experiences in cases where assistance was provided.

In addition, this group also spoke about efforts and approaches used by the group to date. For example, the group presented its concerns to relevant institutions such as the National Parliament and the Government for their consideration on how to respond this situation by amending the Penal Code to include a specific article criminalising incest.

This meeting was warmly welcomed by her Excellency the Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion and she happily accepted the ideas and initiatives presented by the civil society advocacy group and promised that she would convey this issue to other relevant institutions, especially the Minister of Justice. The Secretary of State will also request more information when she needs the help of this group.

The Director General of the Secretariat of State for Equality and Inclusion, Mr. Armando da Costa, stated that it is necessary to have a specific article in the Penal Code that deals with incest, because the Civil Code states that relatives to the second degree cannot get married, so there are different interpretations.

This meeting ended with the submission of a JSMP report launched in 2012 entitled: " Incest in Timor-Leste: An Unrecognised Crime" and the submission of "Improving the Penal Code to better protect women and children," as well as a summary of problematic articles relating to the cases of incest that need to be amended.

There is a plan to hold a similar meeting with Her Excellency the Minister for Social Solidarity. The Advocacy Group is comprised of ALFeLA, Fokupers, Acbit, Pradet, ALola Foundation, Ba Futuru, Mane ho Vizaun Foun, JSMP and Casa-Vida.

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