



**JUDICIAL SYSTEM MONITORING PROGRAMME
PROGRAMA DE MONITORIZAÇÃO DO SISTEMA JUDICIAL**

Press Release

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**SECOND BATCH OF JUDICIAL ACTORS SWORN IN: A POSITIVE STEP
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TIMOR LESTE JUDICIAL SYSTEM**

On 18 May 2009 at 3pm the second batch of judicial actors (judges and public defenders) were sworn in at the Court of Appeal in Caicoli, Dili by the president of the Court of Appeal. This event was witnessed by other high ranking state officials including the President of the Republic Jose Manuel Ramos Horta, the Prime Minister of Timor Leste Jose Alexandre Gusmão, and representatives of the diplomatic corps, NGOs, family members and law students from several universities in Dili. This swearing in ceremony is a positive step for the development of the Timor Leste judicial system.

A total of six judges and public defenders were sworn in, namely two national judges (João Ribeiro and Afonso Carmona), and four public defenders (Sergio Dias Quintas, Rui Manuel Guterres, Marcal Mascarenhas and Laura Valente Lay). Before these six people were sworn in the president of the Court of Appeal Claudio Ximenes appointed the Head of the Public Defenders Office Sergio de Jesus Fernandes da Costa Hornai to guide all of the public defenders in Timor Leste.

The newly appointed public defender Sergio Dias Quintas said that previously they had been really disappointed because they were due to be appointed in accordance with the legal procedures set out in the law on the judicial training. However their appointment did not coincide with the spirit of the law on judicial training. Despite this fact, they remained committed whilst awaiting their appointment as public defenders, and he appealed to his newly appointed colleagues to not become complacent and arrogant upon their appointment. Rather, he said that this appointment was just the initial step in a long journey after being granted new responsibilities as judicial officers. He appealed to his colleagues to be proud of the benefits that their professional work could provide to the community, namely to provide justice for everyone in this nation. He also asked all of his colleagues to be ready to be sent anywhere, whether that is a District Court in Suai, Oecusse, Baucau or Dili.

Timor Leste is a democratic nation based on the rule of law that only recently restored its independence on 20 May 2002 and still needs a large amount of charismatic qualified judicial actors to uphold justice in Timor Leste, a country that faces many shortcomings and is still prone to injustice, as stated by the Head of the Public Defenders Office Sergio Hornai in his speech to the audience who attended this swearing in ceremony.

JSMP acknowledges that Timor Leste is facing serious issues due to the limited amount of judicial actors available to build and develop democracy and the rule of law, and it is possible that this nation will face even bigger challenges if it fails to address the needs of the justice sector.

JSMP expresses its gratitude to the newly appointed judicial actors, and hopes that with their appointment our judicial system can be more productive and effective in providing proper justice to members of the community who require judicial assistance to resolve their disputes. JSMP also hopes that the newly appointed judicial actors will be fully committed and will adhere to their professional oath to uphold the ethics of the legal profession, democratic values and the rule of law as well as all principles pertaining thereto, including a willingness to be sent to any district court. This is the only way to ensure that the law that we revere will be more accessible and closer to the people, because ideally, justice should belong to the people and be for the people.

Once again JSMP expresses its pride in the appointment of this second batch of judicial actors because this is a positive step in the development of the Timor Leste judicial system, and now Timor Leste has 37 legitimately appointed judicial actors, consisting of 13 national judges, 13 national prosecutors and 11 national public defenders.

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