

Halilintar militia convicted of Maliana murder

(JSMP) Dili, 1/10/01

The Special Panel for Serious Crimes of the Dili District Court rendered its decision in the case against Augusto Asameta Tavares on Friday 28 September 2001. Tavares was found guilty of the murder of a pro-independence supporter on 27 August 1999 in the village of Memo, Maliana subdistrict in the western district of Bobonaro.

During the trial the Court heard testimony from several prosecution witnesses regarding the actions of the Halilintar militia group in Memo village. Tavares admitted to the Court that the militia group had gone to Memo to burn houses. He claimed that when it was discovered that the victim was hiding in the ceiling of one of the houses he was forced to stab the victim, who ultimately died of multiple stab wounds.

However, the Special Panel, comprised of Judge Maria Natercia Gusmao Pereira (East Timor) presiding, Judge Sylver Ntukamazina (Burundi) and Judge Marcelo Dolzany da Costa (Brazil), found that these circumstances did not constitute a defence of duress. The Special Panel noted that Tavares had joined the militia group some time earlier, and that by joining the operation on the particular day he shared the intention of the group.

As a result, Tavares was sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment, with credit given for the 11 months he has already spent in detention.

Tavares is the eleventh person convicted by the Special Panel for Serious Crimes.