

JSMP PRESS RELEASE
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JSMP WELCOMES JUDGES' RETURN FROM PORTUGAL

This week eight judges and a prosecutor came back after a year of legal training in Portugal.

'JSMP would like to welcome back these court actors. We are also looking forward to seeing the Judges re-starting their functions, which should allow Oecussi and Baucau District Courts to be able to operate fully.' - stated JSMP.

In July 2003, eight judges and one prosecutor left East Timor for Portugal for a one year training as part of the Timorese-Portuguese Cooperation Programme in the Justice Sector.

The benefits for the individual participants and the justice system have not yet been assessed. However the strain on the remaining court actors and general functioning of the courts have been visible in this last past year due to the severe reduction in the numbers of court actors. The Oecussi District Court was most noticeably affected as its only assigned judge attended the year training in Portugal. The courts of Baucau, Suai and Dili also had to make compromises, and delays were experienced in the operation of these courts due to the temporary absence of key court actors.

JSMP feels that it is important to undertake an evaluation to identify the strengths and challenges of this training. This is an essential step if any consideration is to be given in sending other judicial actors overseas for long-term training. JSMP also believes that this evaluation process should be of a public nature in order to ensure the participation of all stake-holders of the judicial system.

JSMP believes this is a great opportunity for the district courts to make use of the new skills and experience of the returning judges. This momentum should be developed in combination with the experience and progress which has occurred in the Timorese courts during this past year.

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