

Los Palos case to start next week

Judicial System Monitoring Programme, Dili 3/7/01

The first case involving crimes against humanity was due to be heard by the Special Panel for Serious Crimes of the Dili District Court today. However, due to the logistical complexity of a trial that is expected to run for several weeks, the trial has been adjourned to Monday 9 July 2001. The Public Prosecutor will make opening statements on that day, and in a first for the Special Panel, on Tuesday 10 July the entire court will make a visit to the crime scenes in Los Palos, Lautem district.

The composition of the Special Panel that will hear the trial has changed since the preliminary hearing stage, with Judge Marcelo Dolzany da Costa (Brazil) replacing Judge Luca Ferrero (Italy) who has returned home. The other judges, Maria Natercia Gusmao Pereira (East Timor) and Sylver Ntukamazina (Burundi), remain on the panel.

The trial will be held in the newly refurbished court room of the Court of Appeal, rather than in the Dili District Court. This will allow the Special Panel to use electronic recording and transcript production facilities which are not available in the District Court, and which are essential given the large amount of evidence that will be presented during the trial.

The Los Palos case was the first indictment to be filed with the Dili District Court and is one of several priority cases of the Serious Crimes Investigation Unit.