

**Sakunar Militia Leader in East Timor Pleads**

**Guilty to Crimes Against Humanity**

JSMP: 22 May 2003

A former militia commander from Oecussi East Timor, today pleaded guilty to one count of murder as a crime against humanity before the Special Panel for Serious Crimes of the Dili District Court in East Timor.

Quelo Mauno (otherwise known as Agostinho Atolan) aged approximately 42, was the commander of the Sakunar Militia in Naetuna village, Passable sub-district, Oecussi in 1999.

During a one hour hearing before Judge Syler Ntukamazina of the Special Panel, the accused entered a plea of guilty to the crime of murder as a crime against humanity, which is a crime stipulated under Section 5.(1) (a) of UNTAET Regulation 2000/15.

Judge Ntukamazina adjourned the case until 9am on 28 May 2003, at which time a full panel of the court will be convened to determine whether to accept the plea, to hear submissions in mitigation from the defence, and, if the plea is accepted, to deliver their sentence for the offence. This is expected to be the first sitting of a full panel of the Court since the departure from East Timor of Judge Benfeito Mosso Ramos in April this year.

According to the prosecution indictment, on 8 September 1999 during the violence which erupted following the East Timorese vote for independence in the Popular Consultation, Mauno's militia group attacked the neighbouring village of Nibin. During the attack, Domingos Kolo was hiding with his family in a beetle nut plantation near his house. He was captured by the militia, placed under arrest, and then allegedly forced to accompany the militia members to Passabe Sub-district.

During the course of this journey, Quelo Mauno and his militia group are further alleged to have repeatedly kicked Mr Kelo, before dragging him into a beetle nut plantation where they stabbed him to death. His body was later found abandoned in the beetle nut plantation.