

SECOND CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY TRIAL COMMENCES IN DILI  
JSMP, Dili 31 January 2002

The Second Special Panel of the Dili District Court has begun hearing the second trial involving crimes against humanity charges in East Timor. The trial relates to militia violence in Liquica District in March and April 1999, including the massacre of a group of villagers who were hiding in the Liquica Church on 6 April 1999. One charge also relates to another massacre at the house of Manuel Carrascalao in Dili on 17 April 1999. The accused, Armando Dos Santos, is charged with 3 counts of murder and one of other inhumane acts.

The trial is the first to be heard by the Second Special Panel, comprised of Judge Benfeito Mosso Ramos (Cape Verde) presiding, Judge Antero Luis (Portugal) and Judge Antonio Helder (East Timor). The hearing is being conducted in five languages: Portuguese, English, Indonesian, Tetun and Tokodede, the local language of the Liquica area. The court heard detailed testimony from the accused about his involvement in the Besi Merah Putih militia, including a militia ceremony in which he was forced to drink a cocktail of alcohol, animal blood and drugs before killing one man as part of the attack on the Liquica Church. He also testified to the direct participation in the attacks by Indonesian soldiers who were dressed in civilian clothes to look like militia members. The Accused claimed that he was ordered to participate by militia commanders including Leoneto Martins, Eurico Guterres and Joao Tavares.

The Liquica Church massacre and the attack at Manuel Carrascalao's house are two of the ten priority investigations of the Serious Crimes Unit. This case is the first of several indictments arising from these investigations to reach trial.

The trial is expected to last for several more days.

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