



PRESS RELEASE

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Suspected Halilintar Militia Members Arrested in Atabae

On 28 November 2005 police arrested three people believed to be members of the Halilintar militia in the village of Batugade in Atabae sub-district. They were allegedly responsible for the murder of a Maliana man in 1999. The three accused had been living in Indonesia, but crossed the border a week before their arrest to visit family.

On 1 December 2005 the Dili District Court ordered that two of the men, Helder and Jolito Maya, be placed in preventive detention prior to their trials while the third man, Salvador Borges, be released without condition.

JSMP's Director, Tiago Sarmento, reiterated the need for serious crimes cases like this one to be presided over by judges, prosecutors and defenders with sufficient experience in the fields of criminal and international law. According to law, serious crimes cases must be presided over by a panel comprising two international judges and one Timorese judge. Additionally, the investigation process requires a specialist investigation team with sufficient financial and human resources. According to Mr Sarmento:

“There is a danger that cases of serious crimes will be investigated and tried by police and judicial actors without sufficient experience in international law and serious crimes. If this happens, neither the victims nor accused will find real justice.”

He went on to say, *“More thought and preparation is needed to ensure cases like this are tried fairly and competently. The international community still has a role to play in supporting a specialist investigative unit and in providing qualified judicial actors to assist with the trials of serious crimes suspects.”*

“Serious crimes suspects will continue to re-enter East Timor in the future and an organised and well resourced serious crimes process is still needed to ensure that suspects are properly and rigorously prosecuted in a way which guarantees their right to a fair trial. The international community and government of East Timor should listen to the recommendations made by the United Nation's Commission of Experts to this effect.”

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