

Trial begins against East Timorese Former TNI Soldier

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The trial against Gaspar Leki commenced today before the Special Panel of the Dili District Court. The accused is charged with the murder of a man on 9 September 1999 near Hohulu village in Aileu district. At the preliminary hearing in June 2001 the former TNI soldier from Aileu initially admitted he had shot the victim and he pleaded guilty to the charge. However, after Leki explained that he had first thought that he had only shot an animal, the Panel decided not to accept the guilty plea and decided to proceed with a full trial.

The Special Panel that is hearing the trial is comprised of Judge Maria Natercia Gusmao Pereira (East Timor) presiding, Judge Antero Luis (Portugal) and Judge Sylver Ntukamazina (Burundi). The hearing is being conducted in each of the four official languages of the Court: Portuguese, English, Indonesian, and Tetun.

Gaspar Leki told the court that he was ordered to attack the village together with a local militia group.

The crimes against humanity trial that commenced last week against Armando dos Santos resumes on 6 and 7 February 2002 before the Second Special Panel. Over the past two days the Court has heard testimony from the widow and niece of one of the victims. Due to repeated delays in the recruitment of international Special Panel judges, one of the current judges is on both Panels, preventing the two trials from being heard concurrently.

The Gaspar Leki trial is expected to last for several more days.

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