



JUDICIAL SYSTEM MONITORING PROGRAMME
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JSMP requests for Members of Parliament to respect the Constitution and the law when performing their role in the National Parliament

On 17 June 2020 the National Parliament held a plenary meeting to request justification from the Minister of Finance about the proposed amendment to Law No.14/2009 on the Remuneration for Holders of Political Positions.

During this discussion there was a disagreement between some MPs about the use of the official language Portuguese when certain MPs were speaking. The MPs who did not agree with this decision argued that the other MPs should have spoken in Tetum because many people do not understand Portuguese.

The disagreement was exacerbated when an MP who disagreed with the decision to use Portuguese uttered the offensive remark “*Chinese Pirate*” to the MP who was speaking Portuguese. In addition to making the offensive remark, the MP was also involved in a physical assault in the plenary.

“The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste prohibits any person from discriminating against another person on the grounds of race, colour, ethnical origin, language, etc. In addition, the Parliamentary Rules of Procedure also state that when an MP uses improper, insulting or morally offensive language and also when an MP insults or threatens the physical integrity of another MP, that MP loses the right to speak. Therefore, JSMP requests for MPs to respect the Constitution and the law when carrying out their role in the National Parliament,” said the Executive Director of JSMP, Ana Paula Marçal.

Article 16 of the Timor-Leste Constitution on universality and equality

1. All citizens are equal before the law, shall exercise the same rights and shall be subject to the same duties.
2. No one shall be discriminated against on grounds of colour, race, marital status, gender, ethnical origin, language, social or economic status, political or ideological convictions, religion, education and physical or mental condition.

Article 65 of Law No. 15/2009 of the Parliamentary Rules of Procedure on taking the

floor improperly in Article 1) refers to:

e) Using improper, insulting or morally offensive language.

f) Insulting and threatening the physical or moral integrity of another MP.

JSMP has also observed that in addition to contravening the provisions of the Constitution and the law, the behaviour of these MPs also goes against the culture and custom of Timor-Leste regarding mutual respect and presents a poor image to the people of Timor-Leste in particular, and the international community in general. Such behaviour undermines the dignity of National Parliament as a sovereign organ that represents all the people because such behaviour does not uphold ethical values. Therefore, it is hoped that MPs will not repeat such behaviour in the future.

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