



REPÚBLICA DEMOCRÁTICA DE TIMOR LESTE
PROVEDORIA DOS DIREITOS HUMANOS E JUSTIÇA
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**Report from Dr Sebastião Dias Ximenes,
Provedor for Human Rights and Justice
to the 11th Annual Meeting of the Asia Pacific Forum
of National Human Rights Institutions
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Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to present a brief report on the Provedoria for Human Rights and Justice (PDHJ).

When I attended last year's APF meeting as the first Provedor, the institution had only been in existence for four months. We have now existed for just over a year and have been open to the public since late March of this year.

We have achieved a lot since last year's meeting:

- We have recruited and trained 16 staff - the total number allocated to the PDHJ under the last financial year's budget;
- We have developed a structure for the office;
- We have developed an Interim Complaint Handling System and draft Rules of Procedure;
- We have developed a human resources plan and budget for this new financial year, with 32 new posts, including 10 new Human Rights posts. We are ear-marking certain positions, including at the most senior level, for women candidates;

- We have begun a socialization campaign about the PDHJ throughout the country. We have begun to attract media attention for our work and to raise our profile;
- We have begun to receive and investigate complaints;
- We have begun to develop important local, regional and international partnerships;
- Despite being a new organization we have responded to the recent crisis in Timor-Leste with an investigation and monitoring program;
- We have completed our first annual report to the National Parliament.

Allow me quickly to address specific points for this report:

- **Complaint handling**

The PDHJ has received 75 complaints so far, 51 % of which were complaints of human rights violations. Of this number, five complaints have already been closed and the rest remain pending preliminary assessment and investigation. Only twelve per cent of the complaints are from women. The vast majority of complaints are from individuals residing in the national capital – Dili.

We are aware that we have much work to do to disseminate information about the role of the PDHJ and to make our institution accessible to people outside the national capital, to women and to vulnerable groups. We have built these requirements into our plans for the next 12 months and will also build them into our strategic plan.

- **Monitoring**

The PDHJ began with only two Human Rights Officers, a HR Division Director and one Investigator. Despite this, we had planned to begin our first monitoring project – detention monitoring – in early May. Due to the events in TL, our monitoring project was brought forward

and intensified. The PDHJ is now conducting a joint project with the national human rights NGO monitoring network monitoring IDPs and conducting daily monitoring of arrest and detention and judicial proceedings for individuals arrested in relation to the recent crisis.

As part of this monitoring work, the PDHJ issued a joint press release with our NGO partners on the International Day for the Prevention of Torture calling on the Government to sign up to the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

We hope to be able to return to our original plan to conduct detention monitoring of the country's three prisons shortly. We also have plans to expand our monitoring over the next two years to include other critical human rights issues in Timor-Leste.

- **Investigation**

In accordance with my powers to initiate investigations without a complaint, I have opened investigations into the recent crisis in Timor-Leste. Within days, the PDHJ was investigating allegations of human rights violations by the police and the military following the events of late April. We have also since begun to investigate incidents that took place in late May, in particular allegations of human rights violations and maladministration. Our investigation is ongoing and we believe it will make a unique contribution to other efforts to uncover the truth.

- **Education**

The PDHJ has conducted information campaigns in the districts about the institution, raising awareness of mechanisms for redress of human rights violations. In the next months we hope to recruit two human rights officers to work on education and promotion. We will then be able to begin some education activities, including human rights training for police, prison guards, the military and community leaders.

We are also undertaking human rights education and promotional activities as part of our current work with IDPs.

- **Institutional development**

A lot of time has been spent over the last year in planning for the PDHJ. We have as I mentioned developed a new structure and our now planning for a three year strategic planning process which we hope to complete by the end of this year.

A key consideration for the PDHJ currently is fulfilling the requirements of the Paris Principles for the PDHJ to be pluralistic.

With this in mind, we have developed a plan to be pro-active in seeking only female candidates for a certain number of the new positions at the PDHJ, including at the most senior level. We are also recruiting a Women's Rights Officer, a Children's Rights and Vulnerable Groups Officer and an ESCR Officer to develop strategy across these key areas. Central to this must be efforts to make the PDHJ accessible to all, including those from marginalized and vulnerable groups.

Finally we are also developing a proposal for an Advisory Council to the PDHJ which would be comprised of representatives from different groups in society in Timor-Leste, including women, religious and ethnic minorities and vulnerable groups. I hope next year to be able to report back on this.

Thank you for your time.