

May 2003

An International Tribunal Must Be Established for East Timor
A Statement from U.S. Religious Leaders and Organizations

As religious leaders and organizations from the United States of America, we join the global call for the timely establishment of an international tribunal for East Timor.

We remember the tragedies endured by the people of East Timor and have heard their cries for justice. We agree that an international tribunal is necessary to hold accountable those most responsible for the war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed throughout the 24 years of brutal Indonesian military occupation.

The initial years of Indonesia's illegal occupation saw the deaths of more than one-third of East Timor's pre-1975 population. The occupation ended in 1999 amid a wave of terror and violence unleashed upon civilians countrywide. The Indonesian military committed countless atrocities in East Timor, including torture, rape, forced sterilization, disappearance and murder. Justice for such egregious crimes cannot be denied without serious repercussions. Indeed, peace in East Timor and the rule-of-law in Indonesia have already been seriously compromised.

During the occupation, Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo was among the courageous East Timorese who risked their lives to speak out against violence and work for freedom. Bishop Belo was a messenger to the world, who together with the Catholic Church protested countless human rights abuses to the United Nations and called for self-determination for the people of East Timor. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 in recognition of his efforts.

The Catholic Church was both a source of strength for the East Timorese people and a frequent target of Indonesian military violence during the occupation. In October 1991, student activist Sebastião Gomes was killed during a raid on the Motael Church in Dili. His funeral procession turned into a peaceful protest, which the Indonesian military viciously repressed in what became known as the Santa Cruz massacre. The largest massacre of 1999 occurred at the Ave Maria Church in Suai, where thousands of refugees sought sanctuary. On September 6, Indonesian military and militia members stormed the Suai churchyard, killing hundreds of people, including three priests. On the same day in Dili, military and militias viciously attacked Bishop Belo's residence, forcing him to flee his country. On September 25, a Church group was attacked at Lautem Junction. Nine people were killed, including two nuns and three priests, and their bodies dumped in a river.

Nearly two years after these attacks, Bishop Belo issued an eloquent call for justice. ³While we believe in and promote reconciliation, the people of East Timor are crying out for justice against the perpetrators of horrendous crimes committed during the Indonesian occupation. Without justice, the brokenness continues,² he said.

In January 2000, a UN commission concluded, ³Ultimately the Indonesian Army was responsible for the intimidation, terror, killings, and other acts of violence,² and recommended establishing an international tribunal for East Timor. Instead, Indonesia was granted the opportunity to hold its own trials. But the Indonesian court has proven to be a sham.

Last August, the Indonesian court acquitted all five defendants in the Suai Church massacre case. Bishop Belo responded, ³With the recent acquittals in an Indonesian court of military and police officials charged with allowing the mass slaughter of parishioners and priests at a church in the town of Suai in September 1999, [justice] has not happened. The Security Council must look for credible alternatives to achieve justice, and this should include an international tribunal.² Ian Martin, who headed the UN mission in East Timor in 1999, called the Suai acquittals ³particularly disturbing,²

saying, ³The evidence was very clear and very available.² The Protestant Church of East Timor has also called for the establishment of an international tribunal.

As the Indonesian court announces its final verdicts, the U.S. and other governments must not pretend the Indonesian judicial process is in any way acceptable. We call on the U.S. mission to the UN to actively work with its Security Council colleagues to pass a resolution establishing an international tribunal for East Timor. The world's powers must not again turn a blind eye to East Timor's suffering.

The universality of human rights is at stake. If the international community does not step up to prosecute the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against the people of East Timor and the institution of the UN, tyrants need not fear international law. In order to work for world peace, it is crucial that we insist on justice. Otherwise, atrocities will multiply and more victims will be crying out for justice.

Organizational signatories:

1. The Augustinian Justice and Peace Office, Province of St Thomas of Villanova, Washington, DC;
2. Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, Tempe, AZ;
3. The Boston Catholic Task Force for East Timor, Boston, MA;
4. Commission on Peace and Justice, Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, Albany, NY;
5. Conference of Major Superiors of Men, Silver Spring, MD;
6. Ecumenical Peace Institute, Berkeley, CA;
7. Episcopal Peace Fellowship, Chicago, IL;
8. Friends Committee on National Legislation, Washington, DC;
9. Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life at the University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK;
10. Institute on Religion and Public Policy, Washington, DC;
11. International Christian Concern, Washington, DC;
12. Jews Against Genocide, New York, NY;
13. Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Washington, DC;
14. NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, Washington, DC;
15. Peace and Justice Committee, St Francis of Assisi Church, Ann Arbor, MI;
16. The Peace and Justice Interest Group, Shalom Community Church, a Mennonite and Church of the Brethren Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI;
17. The Presidency of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, Silver Spring, MD;
18. Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism, Washington, DC;
19. The Saint Paul Parish Youth Community, Boston, MA;
20. Sisters of Saint Benedict, St Bede Monastery, Eau Claire, WI;
21. Sisters of Saint Joseph of Carondelet Leadership Team, Albany Province, Albany, NY;
22. Sojourners, Washington, DC;
23. The Temple of Understanding, New York, NY;
24. TIKKUN Community, San Francisco, CA;
25. Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International, Washington, DC;
26. United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society, New York, NY;
27. Washington Office, Presbyterian Church (USA), Washington, DC.

Individual signatories:

1. Mohammad H AlRamahi, General Secretary, Islamic Society of Norman, Norman, OK;
2. Rebecca C Asedillo, Executive Secretary, Ecumenical and Interfaith Ministries, General Board of Global Ministries, the United Methodist Church, New York, NY;
3. R Bruce Bavinger, SJ, Saint Aloysius Church, Washington, DC;
4. Rev Michael J Baxter, Catholic Peace Fellowship, Notre Dame, IN;
5. Fr Bob Bossie, SCJ, 8th Day Center for Justice, Chicago, IL;
6. Dr Walter Brueggemann, William Marcellus McPheeters Professor of Old Testament, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA;

7. Fr Reinaldo Cardoso, Pastor, Saint Anthony's Church, West Warwick, RI;
8. Rob Cavenaugh, Director, Washington Office for Advocacy, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, Washington, DC;
9. Rev John Chamberlin, National Coordinator, East Timor Religious Outreach, Petaluma, CA;
10. Larry Cirignano, CatholicVote.org, Washington, DC;
11. Rev Mr Thomas Cornell, Catholic Peace Fellowship, Lake Grove, NY;
12. Rev Douglas P Cunningham, Kings Highway United Methodist Church, Brooklyn, NY;
13. Fr Domingos DaCunha, Our Lady of Fatima Church, Cumberland, RI;
14. Kathleen Desautels, SP, 8th Day Center for Justice, Chicago, IL;
15. Dr Eugene Diamond, Linacre Institute, Catholic Medical Association, Chicago, IL;
16. Rev Michael Dodd, Director, Columban Fathers' Justice and Peace Office, Washington, DC;
17. Vicki Downing, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH;
18. Tom Dozeman, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH;
19. Richard Duncan, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH;
20. John Filiatreau, Reporter, Presbyterian News Service, Louisville, KY;
21. Ambassador Raymond Flynn, former Vatican Ambassador and Mayor of Boston, Chairman of American Catholic Alliance, Washington, DC;
22. Rev Ruth C Fortis, Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, OH;
23. Bishop Thomas J Gumbleton, Auxiliary Bishop, Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit, Detroit, MI;
24. Dr Stanley Hauerwas, Gilbert T Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics, the Divinity School, Duke University, Durham, NC;
25. Dr Susannah Heschel, Eli Black Professor of Jewish Studies, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH;
26. The Rev Elice Higginbotham, Interim Association Minister, Southwest Ohio Northern Kentucky Association, Ohio Conference, United Church of Christ, Dayton, OH;
27. The Rev James Hornsby, licsw, Rector Emeritus, St Luke's Episcopal Church, Fall River, MA;
28. Dr Mary E Hunt, Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual, Silver Spring, MD;
29. Rev Heber C Jentzsch, President, Church of Scientology International, Hollywood, CA;
30. Carolyn M R Kennedy, United Church of Christ, Portage, WI;
31. Seoyong Lee, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH;
32. Rev Jim Lowder, Executive Director, Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, Charlotte, NC;
33. Tom Mahedy, Catholic Church, Wall, NJ;
34. Most Rev John McCarthy, Bishop Emeritus of Austin, Catholic Diocese of Austin, Austin, TX;
35. Maureen McDonnell, OP, Sinsinawa Dominicans, Madison, WI;
36. Michael Meunier, President, U.S. Copts Association, Washington, DC;
37. The Rev Robert Moore, Executive Director, Coalition for Peace Action, Princeton, NJ;
38. Ed Nakawatase, National Representative for Native American Affairs and Asia Working Group member, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia, PA;
39. Fr Neil J O'Connell, OSM, Administrator, All Saints Church, Harlem, NY;
40. Andrew Park, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH;
41. Rev John T Pawlikowski, OSM, PhD, Professor of Social Ethics, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, IL;
42. Grace Potts, St Francis of Assisi Church, Ann Arbor, MI;
43. John Prabhudos, Council for International Religious Freedom, Washington, DC;
44. Sr Helen Prejean, CSJ, Sisters of Saint Joseph of Medaille, New Orleans, LA;
45. Ibrahim Abdul-Mohid Ramey, Board Member, Muslim Peace Fellowship, Nyack, NY;
46. Dr Rosemary Radford Reuther, Carpenter Professor of Feminist Theology, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA;
47. Dave Robinson, Pax Christi USA, Erie, PA;
48. Fr Keith Roderick, Secretary General, Coalition for the Defense of Human Rights, Macomb, IL;

49. Julia Ronngren, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH;
50. The Rev Dr Donna Schaper, Senior Pastor, Coral Gables Congregational Church, Miami, FL;
51. Jakob Schmidt, Peace and Justice Committee of Saints Philips and James Roman Catholic Church, Saint James, Long Island, NY;
52. Susan Severin, Clerk, Peace and Social Concerns Committee, Marin Quaker Meeting, San Rafael, CA;
53. William and Ursula Slavick, Pax Christi Maine, Portland, ME;
54. Rev David W Smith, STD, SSL, Professor of Theology, Founding Director Emeritus, Justice and Peace Studies, University of Saint Thomas, St Paul, MN;
55. Rev Dave Steffenson, PhD, United Methodist Church (retired), Columbus, WI;
56. Gene Stoltzfus, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Chicago, IL;
57. Max Surjadinata, Old Steeple Community Church, United Church of Christ, Aquebogue, NY;
58. Dr James Vijayakumar, Global Ministries, a joint witness of the United Church of Christ and the Chirstian Church, Disciples of Christ, Cleveland, OH;
59. Rev Paula Vmehmel, Martins Lutheran Church, Casselton, ND;
60. Rev Lucius Walker Jr, Executive Director, Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization/ Pastors for Peace, New York, NY;
61. Chuck Warpehoski, Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice, Ann Arbor, MI;
62. Rev Kurt Weiland, Board of Directors, Church of Scientology International, Los Angeles, CA;
63. David Wildman, Executive Secretary, Human Rights and Racial Justice, General Board of Global Ministries, the United Methodist Church, New York, NY;
64. Rev E Philip Wilson, Coordinator, Peace with Justice Office, United Methodist Church, Pittsburgh, PA;
65. Tracy Zielinski, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH.

Diane Farsetta, national field organizer
 East Timor Action Network: 12 Years for Self-Determination & Justice

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Check out these internet sites!
 the East Timor Action Network/US <http://www.etan.org>
 Madison, WI - East Timor projects <http://www.aideasttimor.org>
 Madison's Social Justice Center <http://www.socialjusticecenter.org>

"... in '74, after the [Indonesian military] invasion [of East Timor] ... we all fought together, we were united ... and I believe that if we could unite, we can forge another kind of unity, to fight for other things, like fight against poverty, fight against illiteracy, fight against disease, fight against many, many other things."
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