



**Office of the
Deputy General Prosecutor
for Serious Crimes
Timor Leste**

SERIOUS CRIMES UNIT PRESS RELEASE

26 November 2004

8 FORMER AITARAK MILITIA MEMBERS CONVICTED

On 25 November 2004, the Special Panels for Serious Crimes issued the final decision in the case of the Deputy General Prosecutor against “Alarico Mesquita and others”. The 8 former Aitarak militia members were convicted of persecution (abduction) and torture as crimes against humanity. With these verdicts, 72 persons have now been convicted by the Special Panels for Serious Crimes.

The Special Panel for Serious Crimes of the Dili District Court, presided over by Judge Maria Natércia Gusmao Pereira found that the defendants Alarico Mesquita and Florindo Moreira, were guilty of persecution (abduction) and torture, as crimes against humanity and sentenced them to 6 years and 8 months in prison. Domingos Amati and Francisco Matos were also found guilty of the same charges and were sentenced to 6 years imprisonment. Lourenço Tavares, Laurindo da Costa, Mateus Guterres and Angelino da Costa were found guilty of torture and were all sentenced to 5 years in prison.

The panel of judges found that the eight accused, members of the Aitarak militia in Akanunu, Hera, were directly involved in the events that occurred in the afternoon of 8 May 1999, when a number of Aitarak militia members at a militia roadblock in Akanunu, Hera sub-district, Dili district, abducted and tortured two young men who were perceived by them to be supporters of independence.

This incident was part of the campaign of violence in the area of Hera, Dili district, orchestrated by the Aitarak militia, between April and September 1999. The Aitarak militia in Hera operated from a number of militia posts. They set-up a number of roadblocks at which they stopped vehicles traveling between Dili and Baucau and searched them. Suspected supporters of independence found in the vehicles were apprehended, assaulted and killed.

All the defendants have already started serving their sentences. The Special Panels are expected to issue the written decision on the 6 of December.

The Prosecution was represented by Essa M. Faal and assisted by Ms. Fernanda Fernandes.

SCU statistics as of 26 November 2004

Indictments filed with the court: 84

Total of accused persons: 367 (However 398 people are said to be defendants in cases before the Special Panel, since some accused are in multiple indictments).

Verdicts

Convicted persons: 72

Acquitted persons: 2

Total of indictments pending for trial = 9 (13 defendants)

Location of the accused

81 are within East Timor and 286 are presumed to be outside of East Timor

Nationality of the accused

47 are Indonesian nationals and the remainder are assumed to be East Timorese Nationals or have unknown or uncertain nationality.