



Office of the  
Deputy General Prosecutor  
for Serious Crimes  
Timor Leste

SERIOUS CRIMES UNIT INFORMATION RELEASE

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**BESI MERAH PUTIH MILITIA COMMANDER CONVICTED TO 15 YEARS  
SCU FILES NEW INDICTMENT**

Sako Loro Monu and FIRMI Militia Commanders indicted for the violence in  
Batugade and Balibo

**On 30 November 2004, the Serious Crimes Unit filed an indictment charging five militia commanders with crimes against humanity committed in Balibo in 1999. The five include João da Silva Tavares, head of the Integration Fighters Forces (*Pasukan Perjuangan Integrasi*), and four commanders of the Sako Loro Monu and FIRMI militia who operated in Bobanaro district. João da Silva Tavares has previously been indicted by the Serious Crimes Unit on two other cases charging crimes committed in other areas of Timor Leste.**

The indictment filed on 30 November alleges that João da Silva Tavares, João Oliveira, Commander of the FIRMI militia, Joaquim Maia, deputy commander of the same militia, and the two former Joint Commanders of the Sako Loro Monu militia Ruben Monteiro Gonçalves and Ruben Tavares, are responsible for the murder of 19 persons and for the torture and persecution of another 26. All five indictees are believed to currently reside outside of Timor Leste.

It is stated in the indictment that the Commanders of the SLM and FIRMI militia, appointed by João Tavares in April 1999, traveled frequently between the villages of Batugade, close to the border with West Timor, and Balibo to plan and execute operations which included the abduction, torture and murder of individuals who supported or were perceived to support independence.

The indictment also alleges that on 17th July 1999, Joao Da Silva Tavares disseminated a document ordering a sweep and cleansing operation against supporters of independence in the event that the people of East Timor chose independence in the Popular Consultation. The order was addressed to all militia commanders, including Ruben Gonsalves, Ruben Tavares and Joao Oliveira a.k.a ANO.

Marculino Soares sentenced to 15 years in prison for Crimes Against Humanity

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2004, a Special Panel for Serious Crimes of Dili District Court, presided by Judge Óscar Gomes, rendered its final decision in the case of the Deputy General Prosecutor against Marculino Soares. The former Besi Merah Putih militia commander charged with murder, other inhumane acts and

persecution as Crimes Against Humanity, was convicted for all charges, and sentenced to 15 years in prison (13 for the count of murder and 2 years for the count of other inhumane acts).

Marculino Soares was indicted by the SCU, on 25 July 2003 for participating in the attack on Manuel Carrascalão`s house on the 17 April 1999, which resulted in the death of 12 persons, and serious injuries to 9 others. At the time of the attack, the defendant was a Besi Merah Putih militia commander from the village of Guico, sub-district of Liquiça. On that day he ordered his men to go to a rally in Dili, from where the attack was launched. The group led by Marculino Soares joined the attack. "It has been proven that Marculino Soares personally participated in the organization and execution of the attack", stated the presiding Judge. The defendant is in custody since 20 January 2003 and therefore his time in prison will end in January 2018.

**To date, the Serious Crimes Unit has filed 86 indictments charging 372 individuals with some accused charged in multiple indictments. Cases have been completed through trial for 75 accused persons, with 73 convicted of one or more charges.**