



Research Report | Historical Security Council

Forum: Historical Security Council

Issue: Situation in East Timor (1976, May 15)

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Welcome Letter

Dear Esteemed Delegates,

It is our honour to welcome you to the Historical Security Council session on the situation in East Timor. Your presence in this chamber is a testament to your dedication to international diplomacy.

The situation in East Timor presents the house with a formidable challenge, demanding our utmost attention and concerted efforts. Your delegation's insights, perspectives, and expertise are invaluable as we collaborate to navigate the intricacies of the situation at hand; and establish a course of action steadfast to lasting peace.

We implore each of you to approach the house deliberations with an open mind and a spirit of collaboration. We look forward to listening to your speeches and clauses on May 9 & 11. Let us bridge divides and right history's wrongs!



Background

The occupation of East Timor by Indonesia from 1975 represents a significant chapter in Southeast Asian History, characterized by the brutal suppression of independence and egregious human rights violations. This period is precipitated by a complex interplay of geopolitical interests, internal political dynamics within Timor-Leste, and regional fears of communism.

Following Portugal's withdrawal from Timor-Leste on November 28, 1975, a power vacuum emerged, swiftly filled by the grassroots pro-independence movement, Fretilin (Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente). The emergence of Fretilin, perceived through a Cold War lens, sparked fears among Western powers, particularly the United States, of a potential Communist influence sweeping through Southeast Asia. Concurrently, Indonesian nationalists, led by President Suharto, viewed Timor-Leste's decolonization as an opportunity to annex the territory and eliminate what they perceived as a communist threat.

The subsequent Indonesian invasion of Timor-Leste, codenamed Operation Komodo, marked the beginning of a protracted and devastating occupation characterized by widespread atrocities. Indonesian military forces, intent on maintaining control over the occupied territory, employ tactics of terror, including detention, torture, execution, and forced disappearances, targeting not only Fretilin supporters but also civilian populations perceived as sympathetic to the independence movement.



Definition of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Fretilin	The Fretilin (Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente) was a radical left-wing party that advocated for the independence of East Timor.
Annex	Annex refers to the incorporation of East Timor's territories into Indonesia through annexation.
Operation Komodo	Operation Komodo refers to the military invasion launched by Indonesia on December 7, 1975 aimed at annexing East Timor.

Major Parties Involved

Indonesia:

The Indonesian government, under the authoritarian regime of President Suharto, orchestrated and executed the invasion of East Timor. Acting upon strategic imperatives to counter a perceived Communist threat; Indonesia mobilized its armed forces to forcibly integrate East Timor as an Indonesian state.

Pro-Indonesian Militias:

Militias aligned with Indonesian interests and often operating with tacit or explicit support from the Indonesian military, playing a significant role in



perpetrating violence and intimidation against supporters of East Timorese independence.

Fretilin:

The Fretilin is the foremost pro-independence party in East Timor, assuming a quasi-government role following the withdrawal of Portugal. It has become the primary locus of resistance against Indonesian aggression, rallying East Timorese in defense of their right to self-determination.

Portugal:

As the former colonial power, Portugal's historical ties to East Timor persisted even after its formal withdrawal in 1975. Portugal's engagement, albeit limited by its own domestic constraints and international dynamics, contributed to the diplomatic backdrop against which the invasion unfolded.

United States of America:

The United States of America is cognizant of Indonesia's military campaign in East Timor. Despite documented human rights abuses, strategic considerations, including fears of regional destabilization and geopolitical alignments during the Cold War led to varying degrees of diplomatic support for Indonesia.

High-level U.S. officials, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and President Gerald Ford, played instrumental roles in shaping U.S. policy towards Indonesia and East Timor. Kissinger's meeting with Indonesian President Suharto just days before the invasion, as well as subsequent discussions regarding arms sales, underscored the degree of U.S. involvement in Indonesian affairs.



Timeline

Date	Description of Events
1960	The United Nations General Assembly adds “Timor and dependencies” to the list of non-self-governing territories. East Timor is administered by Portugal as an overseas province.
November 28, 1975	East Timor declares independence from Portugal.
December 7, 1975	Indonesia launches Operation Komodo.
December 17, 1975	Indonesia annexes East Timor as its 27th province.

Possible Solutions

- **Possible Solution 1:** Comprehensive Peace Agreement
 - Facilitate the negotiation and implementation of a comprehensive peace agreement between Indonesia and East Timor; addressing key issues such as territorial sovereignty and security.
- **Possible Solution 2:** Security Sector Reform
 - Implementation of comprehensive security sector reform initiatives in East Timor to rebuild security forces.
 - Ensure their adherence to international human rights standards and civilian oversight.
 - Include initiatives such as but not limited to: demobilization and reintegration programmes.
- **Possible Solution 3:** Transitional Justice Mechanisms
 - Establish robust transitional justice mechanisms including but not limited to:
 - Truth commissions



- Reparations programmes
- **Possible Solution 4:** Local Conflict Resolution Initiatives
 - Support community-based conflict resolution mechanisms and traditional dispute practices in East Timor
- **Possible Solution 5:** Humanitarian Assistance and Development Aid
 - Provide targeted humanitarian assistance and development aid to address the urgent needs of conflict affected populations
 - Long term development initiatives

Useful Resources:

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