

6. International Response to the Human Rights/Humanitarian Situation

There is a sense that over the years, the East Timor problem became – in line with the theory of state-consolidation – a “mere” matter of human rights concern as opposed to a fundamental international legal case of self-determination. In fact, this is what Indonesia and its powerful supporters wished. At the same time, there was an understanding among those who cared that there could be no improvement in the humanitarian situation without an Indonesian military withdrawal, however that was accomplished. Such a view also comes across in the reports of UN Special Rapporteurs who began to visit East Timor commencing in the early 1990s. However, owing to the nature of the UN system, even the annual statements made by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) on human rights abuses committed by Indonesia inside East Timor, were easily parried by Indonesia, assisted by a galaxy of international actors.

To a great degree there is a very close linkage with human rights abuse and a deteriorating humanitarian situation. East Timor was no exception from this assertion. This was the case during the “civil war” of 1975, the full-scale invasion of 1976, during various phases of the occupation, as detailed in other sections of this report, and, most dramatically and urgently in 1999. After 24 years of virtual non-intervention on the ground, there was much irony – and of course much pain and suffering – that the eventual UNAMET intervention in 1999 led to a new round of killing and devastation of a scale that began to draw comparisons with Rwanda and Bosnia, leading to a Security Council-mandated humanitarian rescue of East Timor.

While we have examined the role of the UN Security Council and General Assembly in East Timor [see United Nations], this section focuses upon the interventions of the UNCHR, the role of special rapporteurs, and the concept of “humanitarian intervention” as it related to the events of 1999, in both a symbolic and material sense.

United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR)

East Timor remained on the agenda of the Geneva-based UNCHR under the rubric “Question of the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in any part of the world, with particular reference to colonial and other dependent countries and territories.” Characteristically, the Indonesian government, the Portuguese government, and non-government sources would provide information.

From at least 1992 reports of special rapporteurs on East Timor were tabled in the annual session of the Commission. These included “Forced or Involuntary Disappearance,” “Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions,” and “Torture.” [Retrospective statements by the rapporteurs, government of Indonesia, Portugal, and NGOs are summarized in the Commission’s report of 1995. [See text in Gunn 1997, 117-38].

As Mathew Jardine (2000, 54) has explained, at the UNHCR and related bodies, NGOs play a key role in raising the profile of various human rights situations. Specific to East Timor, it was only because of the persistence of such high profile groups as Amnesty International (AI); along with London-based Tapol and a host of solidarity organizations, that actions and interventions on human rights concerns sharpened, particularly in response to the Dili massacre. For example, in 1993, the

international solidarity movement gained some satisfaction when the Commission passed a resolution critical of Indonesia's practices in the territory. Undoubtedly this move stemmed from growing grassroots pressure and mobilization in Western countries, including the U.S. following the outrage surrounding the Dili massacre. [see International Solidarity]

The Dili massacre had been discussed at length in Geneva in 1992, but Indonesia had evaded outright censure. The outcome was a consensus statement by the chairman deploring the massacre and calling on Indonesia to “improve the human rights situation in East Timor,” and to facilitate access for human rights organizations. In this vote, the Bush administration, joined by Japan and Australia, successfully blocked a resolution criticizing Indonesia.

The 1993 meeting was more critical of Indonesia, adopting for the first time a resolution criticizing Indonesia for abusing human rights in East Timor. According to Inbaraj (1995, 116), the critical difference in 1993 was a change in attitude on the part of the Clinton administration in the U.S. on human rights issues generally, in line with a more wary European bloc. But, by 1993, aided by a large team of diplomats based in Geneva, Indonesia was sapping away at support for resolutions condemning its record on human rights. The 1993 resolution (1993/97) was only carried by one vote. As Indonesia backhandedly retorted to the Commission's request to send a special rapporteur to East Timor. “Indonesia and many countries had rejected the resolution. Therefore Indonesia did not feel compelled to abide by its provisions” [(E/CN.4/1995/61).

Even so, by 1995 the Commission accepted the principle of issuing consensus statements on East Timor which, by definition, were much softer than the reality and, of course, less offensive to Indonesia and its political supporters [cf. E/CN.4/1996/56].

Still, at the 1997 session, the Commission concluded with the following note of concern: “At the lack of progress made by the Indonesian authorities towards complying with the commitments undertaken in statements agreed by consensus at previous sessions of the Commission” [Commission on Human Rights resolution 1997/63, adopted 15 April 1997].

Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups

In late 1991, the UNCHR directly engaged East Timor in the form of an investigation by Professor P.H. Kooijmans, who was already at work in Dili during the Dili or Santa Cruz massacre. Inter alia, Kooijmans recommended that Indonesia ratify the UN convention against torture and that a human rights authority be established in Indonesia. He also called for the powers of the military and police to be balanced by an independent judiciary.

The Dili massacre had also provoked the Working Group on extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions to supply information to the Commission [E/CN.4/1993/46], calling on authorities to investigate and to ensure that those indicted be brought to justice. The Special Rapporteur communicated to the Indonesian government his concerns that the Indonesian National Commission of Inquiry into the massacre impose sanctions sufficiently appropriate so as not to contribute to a “climate of impunity.”

In 1992, the Special Rapporteur on Torture, Bacre Waly Ndiaye, who visited Indonesia and East Timor in November 1991 confronted the Indonesian government with cases of torture following the massacre, only to be rebutted by the Indonesian government [E/CN.4/1992/17].

In July 1994, serving as UN rapporteur on summary extra-judicial or arbitrary executions, Bacre Waly Ndiaye returned to Indonesia and East Timor. This time he was mandated to collect more information on the massacre, especially as Indonesia was deemed to have supplied “incomplete information,” to the Commission, as well as to gather information on the “right to life” in the post-massacre period. His mandate disallowed him from broaching the political status of the territory. Alongside various findings and determinations, the rapporteur recommended that “the Santa Cruz killings should nor be considered a thing of the past. They must not be forgotten...” He also called to an end to the impunity of the armed forces (Gunn 1997, 139-71). But in 1995 the Special Rapporteur noted that he remained “deeply concerned” about the “ongoing unrest and violence “ in East Timor and regretted that he had received no reaction from Indonesia with regard to recommendations made upon during his visits to Indonesia and East Timor in 1994. During 1995, the Special Rapporteur transmitted to the Government of Indonesia five urgent appeals on behalf of East Timorese who were allegedly beaten or subjected to torture or ill-treatment by police and security agents. Indonesia denied these allegations.

The Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions with regard to East Timor described in its report to the Commission [E/CN 4/1986/4] that no reaction had been received from the Government of Indonesia with regard to visiting Indonesia and East Timor, in connection with interim decision [34/1994] concerning Xanana Gusmão.

The Working Group on Forced or Involuntary Disappearances with regard to East Timor noted that during 1995 it received no information from the Government of Indonesia concerning the cases of “some 200 disappearances” related to the Dili massacre, as well as “some other cases” which

occurred in 1992. It first raised the Dili massacre in a report of 15 December 1992, although largely rebutted by Indonesia [E/CN.4/1993/25].

In early December 1995, the Indonesian government facilitated a visit to East Timor by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ecuadorian diplomat José Ayala Lasso, otherwise known to human rights supporters for his non-confrontational “quiet diplomacy” approach. In the course of his two-day visit to Dili, which included a meeting with imprisoned Xanana Gusmão, Ayala told his Indonesian hosts to keep up the “dialogue.” But this was accomplished amidst high security and a crackdown upon East Timor petitioners. Later speaking to reporters he stated that, although there were some overall improvements in the general situation, “grave” violations of human rights remained, including torture, illegal imprisonment and denial of free speech. Indonesia had only agreed to his visit to escape embarrassing condemnation in the annual session of the Human Rights Commission.

Between 20 November and 4 December 1998, a UN rapporteur on violence against women also visited Indonesia and East Timor. Noting that the situation had improved under the Habibie administration, at the same time “serious and systematic violations” against women continued, even though women feared reporting rape and sexual violence. The report described a traumatized population with rape a daily occurrence. The Government of Indonesia denied the tenor of the report at the annual session of the UNHRC at Geneva. [E/CN.4/1999/ADD.3]

The 30 August Ballot, Aftermath, and Humanitarian Considerations

We observe that no humanitarian component was built into UNAMET. This is surprising and misguided as the number of Internally Displaced People (IDP) generated by militia activity in the months before the ballot already numbered in the thousands with the livelihood of perhaps tens of thousands of people deeply affected. Again, this is all the more surprising, especially as Security Council resolution 1264 (1999) adopted on 15 September 1999 stated that it was “Appalled by the worsening humanitarian situation in East Timor, particularly as it affects women, children and other vulnerable groups.” Added to that, operative paragraph two emphasized “the urgent need for coordinated humanitarian assistance [and] the effective delivery of humanitarian aid” [(S/Res/1264 (1999)).

On 14 September, two weeks after the UN-sponsored ballot on East Timor's future, a beleaguered UNAMET evacuated to northern Australia, leaving behind a handful of officials in the dubious security of the Australian consulate. Within hours of their departure, the UNAMET compound was looted. Over the preceding two weeks, much of Dili had been systematically reduced to ashes, with most of its population forcibly removed. Decomposed bodies lay in the streets. Having long harassed and intimidated foreign observers, aid-workers, journalists, and even UNAMET, and having tasted blood with the pre-ballot assault on pro-independence campaigners, the devil licked its chops, and, scarcely awaiting the announcement of the ballot result on 4 September, began the wholesale slaughter of Timorese in the capital and in isolated towns and hamlets across the half-island. Especially targeted were males and those who voted for independence. But the unthinkable in Timor also happened; the Church was attacked, sparing neither priests, nor nuns, while the Bishop of Dili made a narrow escape. The numbers killed or disappeared in this wicked display of medievalism appeared incalculable at the time but undoubtedly run into the thousands. Who, then,

committed this atrocity, bordering upon genocide? Precisely those entrusted by the UN to ensure the peaceful conduct of the ballot, the TNI, and their militias (Gunn 2000, 279).

Humanitarian Response to September 1999

Much hope rested upon the newly appointed UN Human Rights Commissioner, Mary Robinson. As former president of Ireland she had gained a formidable reputation as an upholder of human rights. Ireland had taken a strong position in European councils in support of East Timor's rights to self-determination. As the UN Commissioner, her words carried weight. All the more important that, in the wake of the September 1999 violence, Mary Robinson declared the necessity to create a commission leading to a Rwanda-style tribunal to prosecute crimes against humanity. The international community expressed outrage, as Jakarta went into denial mode and anti-foreign nationalism surged across Indonesia.

But the clock was also ticking on the lives of some 300,000 to 500,000 IDP or internal refugees who fled the torched and devastated urban centers of East Timor for the mountains as food supplies dwindled and vindictive militia and military closed in. The fate of an additional 200,000 terrorized East Timorese pushed out of the cities and towns across the border to concentration-style camps in west Timor raised many questions as to rebuilding East Timor, especially as militias and Kopassus elements from within the military began to retreat to west Timor and even to Jakarta.

As the Security Council Mission to Jakarta and Dili of 8-12 September 1999 reported to the Security Council, one of the goals of the Indonesian campaign of destruction was to drive out international observers, humanitarian workers, and the media. The Mission also drew attention to

the systematic implementation of a “scorched-earth” policy by the Indonesian military, selective executions of East Timorese students, intellectuals, and others, massive population displacements to west Timor, and permanent displacements of East Timorese around Indonesia.

Rightly the report signaled the “grave” humanitarian situation facing East Timorese and refugees in west Timor. Additionally, the report signaled “strong prima facie evidence of abuses of international humanitarian law committed since the announcement of the ballot result on 4 September.” Neither did the Indonesian introduction of martial law on 7 September alter the state of affairs nor did it adequately respond to the humanitarian situation in East Timor. Finally, the report recommended 927 (i) “The grave humanitarian crisis in East Timor should be given the topmost priority by the United Nations, in terms of both supply of basic needs to the displaced population, including in West Timor, and of insistence that the Government of Indonesia provide access and security to United Nations and international humanitarian organizations.”

Security Council Resolution 1264 of 15 September endorsed the Jakarta/Dili mission report, emphasizing the urgent need for coordinated humanitarian assistance and the importance of allowing full, safe, and unimpeded access to humanitarian organizations.

International Commission of Inquiry on East Timor

On 15 October 1999 the High Commission for Human Rights announced the composition of the International Commission of Inquiry on East Timor, comprising internationally respected legislators and human rights experts and chaired by Sonia Picardo, a Costa Rican jurist and legislator. Its mandate, was:

“to gather and compile systematically information on possible violations of human rights which might constitute breaches of international humanitarian law committed in East Timor, and to provide the Secretary-General with its conclusions with a view to enabling him to make recommendations on future action.”

The mandate included cooperation with the Indonesian National Commission of Inquiry.

A first meeting of the Commission was convened in Geneva in November, meeting again in Darwin with UNAMET staff, along with members of the Indonesian National Committee of Inquiry. The Committee visited East Timor from 25 November to 3 December, and Jakarta from 5 to 8 December 1999, completing discussions with the Indonesian National Committee. They were unable to visit west Timor, as planned.

Inside East Timor, the mission traveled extensively, surveyed damage and, in line with its mandate, gathered information, and collected testimonies, especially to areas where serious human right violations had occurred, namely Liquisa, Suai, Cailaco and Maliana. A forensic anthropologist also accompanied them. They also heard the views of Xanana Gusmão, then in Alieu as to “reconciliation and justice.” In so doing he also set down the need for “establishing accountability” for human rights violations committed in East Timor. Bishop Belo told the Commission in Dili that “the perpetrators of human rights violations should be brought to justice, regardless of whether they were East Timorese or Indonesians.” Altogether the Commission gathered 170 testimonies, in addition to other information gathered from the UN, NGOs, etc. The Commission paid special attention to women and child victims.

In its conclusions to be presented to the Secretary-General, the Commission wrote that owing to time constraints, the mission had to be regarded as a “starting point in the process of bringing those responsible for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law to justice.” Among the recommendations:

“The Commission believes that it has a special responsibility to speak out on behalf of the victims who may not have easy access to international forums. They must not be forgotten in the rush of events to redefine relations with the region, and their basic human rights to justice, compensation and the truth must be fully respected. This is a responsibility which the United Nations must shoulder both in the short and long terms, in particular in its trusteeship relation with then people of East Timor as it administers the territory towards independence.”

The Commission also advocated the establishment by the UN of an international independent investigation and prosecution body charged with further systematic investigation of human rights violations, identifying the persons responsible for those violations, including those with command responsibilities.

Additionally, the Commission recommended that; “The UN should establish an international human rights tribunal consisting of judges appointed by the UN, preferably with participation of members from East Timor and Indonesia. The tribunal would sit in Indonesia, East Timor and any other relevant territory to receive the complaints and to try and sentence those accused by the independent investigation body of serious violations of fundamental human rights and international humanitarian law which took place in East Timor...” [Report A/54/660 as addressed to UN General Assembly/Security Council, 54th session, 54th year, Agenda item 96 (01/02/00)].

Human Rights Discourse and the Role of States

We are mindful that individual states did not hold back from criticizing the Indonesian government over humanitarian and human right transgressions. The Dili massacre of 1991 was a major litmus test of liberalism over pragmatism. Even so, the new human rights discourse on East Timor did not necessarily translate into support for self-determination.

Famously, the Australian Foreign Minister termed the Dili massacre an “aberration,” where even East Timorese, much less defense attachés and Indonesia experts, could easily see that this infamous massacre fell into a mold, or at least a pattern that reached back to the origins of the New Order government. To take another example, when it became obvious to the same defense attachés and Indonesia experts by around late 1988 that TNI was arming, training, and goading militia groups in East Timor, the Australian government was famously and unhelpfully terming these elements “rogues,” when the evidence suggested links reaching through the TNI command. Neither did Australia release critical intelligence on militia buildups when such information may have contributed to better UN planning for the worst-case scenario (Ball, et.al, 2002, 238-61).

But even the Clinton State Department in its Annual Human Rights report, for those who cared to read, could find evidence of grave human rights abuses in East Timor sufficiently damning to merit humanitarian intervention, although that was never suggested. We have observed the role of individual congressmen and women who put relentless pressure on Congress at critical moments to exert leverage on human rights, to impose sanctions, and to cut off military assistance, such as happened after the Dili massacre.

The conversion in the Western press to a human rights discourse on Indonesia was almost religious after the fall of and, in some cases, in the run-up to the fall of the Suharto regime. [see International Media]

Meeting the Crisis of 1999: Role of the International Community

Sanction for the humanitarian operation mounted from Darwin in the form of UN air drops was obtained from President B.J. Habibie during his meeting with the visiting Security Council mission in mid-September. Negotiations were immediately entered into with Indonesian authorities for overflight permission in order to mount the food drops.

Taking the Australian role as an example, in September and October 1999, the Australian government announced A\$14 million in emergency and humanitarian assistance for East Timor through international relief agencies, especially World Food Program (WFP), UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), ICRC, and Australian NGOs. According to an official source, Australia's humanitarian assistance to the East Timor crisis for 1999-2000 totaled approximately A\$37 million “the largest Australian contribution ever made to an international humanitarian relief effort.” This figure does not include the INTERFET budget, nor does it factor in reconstruction or development assistance. The assistance included support for repatriation and resettlement and emergency shelter; support for restoration of essential services; transport, food and other support. A surge of concern in Australia generated generous support from community groups, NGOs, and the public totaling some A\$1.4 million [cf. Australian Senate 2000, 37-38].

On 17 September a RAAF Hercules flown from Darwin dispatched the first relief. This flight comprised air deliveries of rice and blankets in the regions of Ermera, Manatuto, and Uomori. The following day, rice and high protein biscuits were dropped near Monte Maulo. Airdrops continued until 29 September. Altogether, Australian aircraft joined by British and French along with a WFP C-30 Hercules aircraft, were used to drop over 194 tonnes of emergency food supplies over East Timor (cf. *East Timor in Transition*, 2001, 150). At the same time two planes arrived in Dili bringing food for distribution by the ICRC which had maintained a skeletal staff presence in the territory through the violence. The ICRC mission quickly reverted back to “traditional” concerns such as seeking to establish that detainees were kept in satisfactory material and psychological condition.

On 20 September the newly appointed Humanitarian Coordinator (Ross Mountain), arrived in Dili with representatives of concerned UN organizations in order to make an assessment of emergency needs. Their preliminary assessment estimated that over 500,000 people had been displaced during the post-ballot period. Priorities for the humanitarian assistance program were focused on food, health, shelter, water and sanitation. Some forty aid organizations were involved in emergency aid distribution during October. In this month over 64,000 people had returned to Dili, and a coordinated assistance program had been established to provide each returnee with food and emergency non-food assistance in the form of blankets, household items and shelter.

INTERFET was also mandated by the Security Council to facilitate humanitarian assistance operations. INTERFET duly assisted in the provision of transportation; helicopters, for aid distribution.

In general terms the UN Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) coordinated the emergency assistance program of all aid organizations in order to avoid duplication of effort. By October considerable progress had been achieved. OCHA sought to raise US\$199 million to bridge the nine month period from October 1999 to June 2000). This appeal also included some US\$16 million for assistance to west Timor, both for refugee camps and local communities affected by the influx of displaced people.

While the provision of temporary shelters in the form of tarpaulin during the emergency phase obviously buffered a large percentage of the population during the 1999/2000 rainy season, aid workers, and international NGOs who converged on East Timor during the crisis are not all in agreement as to smooth coordination of emergency relief on the part of UN agencies. For example, Robin Taudevin, writing of his experience in implementing UNHCR's shelter program across several district for a local NGO, found that, technically, the UNHCR does not recognize IDPs as legitimate refugees, only recognizing those who actually crossed a border. He found that this policy was of great concern to community leaders in East Timor, especially as they feared that recently returned refugees would receive priority housing assistance (Taudevin and Lee 2000, 37). Neither was there always good understanding between NGOs, especially small versus large, such as ICRC, Caritas, CRS, and Care. Rob Wesley-Smith, working as advisor to the Portuguese NGO Oikos in the area of agriculture in the emergency period (early October 1999) gained support from FAO that, for dietary reasons, field beans and vegetable seed be introduced in the first critical distribution. Wesley-Smith advocated the use of local seed varieties as opposed to hybrid imported from Surabaya, especially as the former were better adapted and better stored, in any case advise ignored (Taudevin and Lee 2000, 43-45).

World Bank Response to the Crisis

Concerned to bridge the transition between the emergency phase and the need to plan for longer term development, UN agencies and East Timorese leaders, agreed in late September for a visit to East Timor by a World Bank Joint Assessment Mission comprising international experts including representatives of the IMF. The Mission visited East Timor from 27 October to 15 November leading to the first of a cycle of World Bank coordinated donor conferences on East Timor. The first, held in Tokyo on 17 December established the basic parameters under which the UNTAET mission, essentially operational in late January 2000, would engage in East Timor reconstruction and development.

The World Bank found that, of a pre-crisis population of 850,000 people, approximately 100,000-150,000 were still refugees in Indonesian camps. According to the Bank's estimate, 75 percent of the displaced and about 70 percent of the country's physical infrastructure had been destroyed or rendered inoperable. The social sector was likewise decimated. For example, the health system had lost all fixed equipment and consumables. Almost all health workers had fled. Likewise the education system had been rendered inoperable with loss of school building, text books, and material.

As Lancell Taudevin (2000, 11) comments, the World Bank recorded a negative perception of Indonesian development priorities, especially as programs reflected the availability of decentralized budgets rather than a response to locally perceived needs. Specifically, the Bank stated that the Indonesian administration had “undermined many of the traditional bases of East Timor capacity through programs of forced education and aggregation” and “applied regulations

that banned community participation in local infrastructure maintenance;” “introduced institutional alternatives to community organization;” and “operated under a complex system of government permitting arrangements.” Taudevin (2000, 12-13) summarizes that:

“despite claimed large expenditure on East Timor development, on the ground impacts were relatively slight, ownership was low, and long-term sustainability of most development programs were minimal. The Bank emphasized that alternative program designs should emphasize community ownership, high quality technical assistance and more local adaptation. They hoped, as do all aid agencies that with such qualities, better results could be achieved under their own programs.”

Although long in implementation, and continuing beyond the time-frame of this report, the Bank established an Agriculture Rehabilitation and Development Project (ARP) spanning three years and budgeted at US\$21.4 million. A key component of the project was to improve food security in selected households, and increase agricultural production in selected project areas and promoting rural growth. In practical terms, a key component of the scheme was “priority productive asset restoration.” Lost assets included water buffalos, Bali cows, chickens, hand tools and agricultural implements. Another component was Irrigation and Infrastructure. Especially as irrigation canals and dikes had been destroyed or allowed to downgrade, certain emergency rehabilitation measures were in order to restore irrigated riceland to cultivation in Manatuto, Betano and Maliana. A more controversial part of the World Bank plan was the establishment of so-called Pilot Agriculture Service Centers. The coffee sector which came through the violence relatively unscathed was relegated by the bank to private sector rehabilitation. A major and demonstrably flawed premise of

Bank planning for East Timor recovery was the emergence of rural markets among risk-averse peasant-farmers more accustomed to self-sufficiency and even a barter economy in many instances. The Bank also allocated US\$38 million to the Health Sector Rehabilitation and Development Program spanning a three-year period. The overall goal of the program was to “restore access to basic health services in the transitional period between humanitarian efforts and the development of the health system;” “to begin the process of health policy and system development; and build local capacity.” In February 2000 an Interim Health Authority was established, the basis of the future Department of Health. From the outset the Authority sought to coordinate and accelerate the National TB Program, supported by Caritas and WHO, as well as immunization programs for children and women, coordinated by UNICEF; along with health promotion, etc. (Taudevin 2000, 19-20).

Meeting the West Timor Crisis

Although INTERFET played a key role in resettling refugees and in delivering humanitarian assistance, it had no mandate to operate in west Timor and was thus unable to access refugees across the border. Responses to the crisis generated by displaced people in west Timor was coordinated by UNHCR, in cooperation with OCHA, and working with the Indonesian government. Notably, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, visited west Timor from 18-20 September 1999 and impressed upon Indonesian President B.J. Habibie the need for safe access to aid agencies. UNHCR quickly established a permanent presence (until forced to evacuate in August 2000 following the slaying of three international staff by militia). Working in cooperation with OCHA, UNHCR sought to register the refugees while seeking Indonesian agreement as to their rights to return unhindered.

Various mechanisms were also worked out as to the return of refugees by air, boat, and road. In this, the IOM also played a key role. Lack of political will on the part of Indonesia seriously impeded refugee return and compromised, even endangered the lives of UNHCR and NGO workers alike. Notably, the Eric Hotung Foundation, a Hong Kong-based philanthropic organization, supplied a ship, the “Patricia-Anne Hotung,” which, crucially, ferried thousands of refugees between Kupang and Dili during the emergency phase.

Prevented by Japanese law from participating in INTERFET, the Japanese government dispatched Self Defense Force aircraft to Surabaya which, in turn, ferried food and shelter materials to Kupang for refugee distribution.[see Diplomacy: Japan]