

# MEDIA BRIEFING NOTE

By UNMISSET Spokesperson's Office

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Dili, 19 August 2002

## **SRSR MEETS WITH GOVERNMENT MINISTERS TO DISCUSS REMEDIES FOR THE BECORA PRISON BREAKOUT**

Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Kamallesh Sharma, has cut short his visit to Thailand and the Philippines in order to follow up quickly with the Government of East Timor on Friday's breakout from Becora Prison.

Based on figures obtained from the prison authorities, 179 prisoners escaped from the confines of Becora Prison at around 11am on Friday 16 August. While 102 prisoners eventually returned to the prison after meeting with the Minister for Internal Administration, 77 disappeared from the area, of whom 23 have since been apprehended or have surrendered. This leaves 54 fugitives at large. Coordinated police action is continuing to locate and arrest the remaining escapees.

It appears that delays in the justice system was the principal grievance raised by the prisoners with the Minister for Internal Administration after Friday's escape.

Upon his return to East Timor this afternoon, SRSR Sharma is meeting separately with the acting Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Jose Ramos Horta, the Minister for Internal Administration, Rogerio Lobato and the acting Minister for Justice, Domingos Sarmento. Important issues on the agenda for these discussions include strengthening the management of the prisons and the administration of justice.

It is well recognised that an accessible, equitable and efficient justice system is critical to the functioning of the State. As soon as he arrived in the mission last month, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UN Resident Coordinator Sukehiro Hasegawa began work on the development of a Strategic Plan for Justice Sector Development, to assist the government in its own planning for the sector. In formulating the strategy, the DSRSG has consulted widely within the UN system and with the donor community.

UNMISSET is ready to work closely with the government and donors to implement measures to strengthen the management and performance of East Timor's justice system. The government is not alone: there is enormous goodwill and expertise that it can call on to assist in this complex area.



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## HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VISITS CHINA, CAMBODIA AND EAST TIMOR

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, began yesterday a visit to China, Cambodia and East Timor. She will use her visits to pursue OHCHR's human rights agenda, including cooperation with the mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights and treaty bodies, human rights concerns in the countries, and coordination with UN agencies.

On her seventh visit to China as High Commissioner, upon her arrival in Beijing, Mrs. Robinson opened a workshop for judges and lawyers. The workshop launched an important new area of human rights co-operation between her Office (OHCHR) and Chinese authorities. Mrs. Robinson will take stock of the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding reached between China in November 2000. The High Commissioner will also have meetings with a number of Government Ministers and will visit a project of the All China Women's Federation. While in Beijing, Mrs. Robinson will also meet with King Norodom Sianouk of Cambodia.

From Beijing the High Commissioner will travel to Phnom Penh, Cambodia. During her stay, from 20 to 22 August, she will focus on judicial and legal reform, human trafficking and economic and social rights. Mrs. Robinson will meet with Prime Minister Hun Sen, a number of Ministers including the Minister of Women and Veteran's Affairs, the Council of Judicial and Legal Reform and representatives of NGO's with a focus on human rights issues. She will also address the National Assembly.

From 23 to 25 August, Mrs. Robinson will be in East Timor. In Dili she will address the Parliament and will also attend the first Community Reconciliation of the country's Reception Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She will travel to Suai, where she will meet the survivors of the 1999 Suai Church massacre, in which over 100 people were killed. She met with the group during her first visit to East Timor two years ago.

