

By UNMISSET Spokesperson's Office

Dili, 27 November 2002

INVESTIGATION LAUNCHED INTO A DEATH ARISING FROM LAST MONDAY'S VIOLENCE IN BAUCAU

UNMISSET announced today that it has launched a formal investigation into the death earlier today of a 27-year-old Baucau resident, Calisto Belo Soares, who was critically injured by gunfire on Monday during a violent demonstration outside the headquarters of the Timor-Leste Police Service in Baucau, Timor-Leste's second largest town.

During the confrontation outside the police station, demonstrators attempted to storm the station and several police vehicles were badly damaged. A large number of warning shots were fired by national police. At least one firearm was also reportedly carried by demonstrators.

The demonstration was called to protest the police response to an incident a few days earlier to a roadblock erected by villagers to collect an unofficial toll from passing vehicles. Police and villagers clashed, a policeman was seriously injured and his attacker also injured.

The Monday morning violence was brought under control within hours and Baucau township has been calm since then. A PKF Platoon of some 30 Portuguese troops was dispatched from Dili to Baucau on Monday to support the approximately 100 TLPS officers and 56 UN POL officers in the area. Today, a successful reconciliation meeting was held in Baucau between the community and the police with church and UNMISSET Human Rights Unit representatives in attendance.

The UNMISSET investigation is looking into the causes of the violence and also the reasons an exceptionally large number of warning rounds appear to have been fired by the Timor-Leste Police Service. The investigation is being conducted by the United Nations Police (UNPOL) through its National Investigation Unit with the participation of UNMISSET's Human Rights Unit. Representatives of the Timor-Leste Police Service will also be participating.

In speaking about the UNMISSET investigation, UNPOL Police Commissioner Peter Miller said today, "It is designed to be as thorough and transparent as possible. We will leave no stone unturned to get at the truth." The Commissioner encouraged all



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witnesses to the violence in Baucau to come forward and share as much information as possible. He said this was vital in order to establish the circumstances leading to Mr. Soares's tragic death.

Another investigation of the Baucau incident has been launched by Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri and includes Timor-Leste Public Administration officials and an UNPOL representative.

Regarding the death of Calisto Soares: the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) Sukehiro Hasegawa visited his family at the UN hospital today shortly after the young man died and offered his condolences.

UNMISSET STATEMENT ON THE RESIGNATION OF BISHOP BELO

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) Kamallesh Sharma today praised Catholic Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo for his years of courage and commitment to the cause of human rights, and for his inspirational guidance to the people of Timor-Leste.

Bishop Belo, who shared the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize with Jose Ramos-Horta, officially announced on 26 November that he was resigning his post of Apostolic Administrator of Dili, attributing his decision to health.

Mr. Sharma said, "I am concerned to learn about Bishop Belo's health condition," and he wished the Bishop an early recovery. He also said that he hoped to meet with the Bishop later this week following Mr. Sharma's return from an official visit to Australia.

End



MEDIA BRIEFING NOTE

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OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (OSRSG)
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