

East Timor marks 25 years of independence



Dili, August 31 (RHC)-- Timor-Leste, or East Timor, is marking the 25th anniversary of its vote to become independent from Indonesia.

East Timor had been under Indonesian occupation since 1975. Indonesia killed more than a third of the population, over 200,000 Timorese.

After the 1999 independence vote, the Indonesian military and pro-Jakarta militias began attacking civilians, killing an estimated additional 1,500 people and burning parts of East Timor to the ground.

Timor-Leste Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão, who had been imprisoned for years by Indonesia, and President José Ramos-Horta, leaders of East Timor's independence movement, addressed the nation on Friday.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres is in East Timor for the occasion. Guterres was the prime minister of Portugal at the time of the 1999 vote and a vocal supporter of East Timorese independence. East Timor was occupied by Portugal before Indonesia invaded.

Earlier this week, Guterres spoke from the capital Dili, where he addressed the climate crisis. The UN chief said: "Throughout the Pacific, climate chaos is affecting those who did the least to cause it. And this is the time to act against climate change and to reinforce measures to protect the Timorese people in the face of the intensification of climate disasters. But Timor-Leste cannot be alone in this effort. The international community has an obligation to support them, namely through an ambitious result at COP29 this year in terms of financial support."

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