

## Press Release

### Nine Years after the Recommendations of the Commission for Truth and Friendship (CTF): Where Are the Children Now?

Jakarta/Dili, July 15, 2017

Nine years ago today, on July 15 2008, the final report *Per Memoriam ad Spem* from the Commission for Truth and Friendship (CTF) was officially submitted to the Governments of Indonesia and Timor Leste. The bilateral commission made several recommendations including human rights training for the police and military, and measures to assist victims. The commission also reaffirmed the fact that several thousand East Timorese children were forcibly taken to Indonesia, recommending that the two countries take steps to find and reunite these children, the majority of whom are now adults. However, nine years later, there has been very little progress in this area.

Between 2013 and 2016, civil society organisations have traced these stolen children and their families. To date, we have documented 97 cases, 42 of whom have since participated in reunion visits with their families in Timor Leste, supported by the national human rights institutions and relevant ministries from the two countries. However, there are thousands more survivors who remain separated from their families, without contact for many decades. Our findings show that the majority of stolen children in Indonesia faced difficulties obtaining citizenship documents, experienced abuse, hardships and challenges to own land and obtain jobs due to their lack of education. Many show signs of on-going trauma.

Civil society groups and the national human rights institutions from Indonesia and Timor-Leste have taken initial steps to implement the CTF recommendations on finding and reuniting these survivors. However, both governments should prioritise creating specific policies and taking immediate action to redress the situation of these victims. The Indonesian government must seek to acquire information about those who remain missing and disappeared, take urgent measures to ensure their rights to access identification and citizenship documents, and provide remedies to them as victims. The government of Timor-Leste must provide a special free visa status to the stolen children and their families to facilitate their travel. Timor-Leste's new Centro National Chega, as an institution with a mandate to implement the truth commission recommendations, must develop a special program in consultation with the stolen children and civil society. Most urgently, the two governments should create a mechanism to facilitate reunion visits for greater numbers of stolen children who have been located or are in the process of being found.

#### Working Group on Stolen Children

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