

# Marablia Memorial Exhibition

LEARNING FROM THE PAST,  
TAKING ACTION FOR THE FUTURE



# OVERVIEW

During the night of 10 June, Falintil troops from the North Frontier and South Central Sectors and members of clandestine networks in Dili launched attacks on the Indonesian post at the broadcasting transmitter in Marabia near Dare and raided the armoury of Company B of Battalion 744 in Becora in eastern Dili. In the attack on Marabia several Indonesian soldiers were killed. In the aftermath of the attacks hundreds of people were arrested in a massive operation that involved virtually the entire security apparatus in Dili, including units of the territorial structure (the Korem, the Kodim, the Koramils and the Babinsa), the Dili-based Battalion 744, Special Forces (Kopassandha) and Hansip.

# LOCATION



# KILLINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

The Commission received the names of 121 people who were killed, disappeared or died in detention either as a result of torture or severe deprivation in the weeks after 10 June. Most of the victims died in Dili. However, the Commission also received information about the killing or disappearance of people in the districts of Aileu, Manufahi, and Manatuto outside Dili, who were either captured after fleeing Dili following the attacks or who were suspected of being members of clandestine networks which had played a role in the planning of the attacks. The attacks had a serious impact on the wider population, but particularly on ordinary civilians living in the areas close to where the attacks had taken place.

Maria Immaculada, a young woman who belonged to a clandestine cell, was detained on 12 June 1980. After she was interrogated and tortured at the Mes Korem, she was transferred to the Comarca in Balide where she witnessed other prisoners being taken out of the prison at night and disappearing:

*They would take people out after 10 o'clock at night. Two or three vehicles would be waiting outside the Comarca. The lights would go off. The detainees they would take out would have their mouths covered and be handcuffed. Then they would be taken away in the vehicles. Then the lights would come on again. They might take detainees out like that two or three times a night. Among people I knew who were taken out in this way were Afonso Moniz, João Barreto, José da Sousa, who had been in the military police, and the son of a nurse called Tito who died. His three brothers, Antonio, Xismundo, and Edmundo, also disappeared till this day.*



In a letter to Archbishop Leo Soekoto of Jakarta, written on 12 July 1980, the Apostolic Administrator of Dili, Monsignor Martinho da Costa Lopes, described **ve** of the killings that occurred in Dare in the aftermath of the 10 June attacks:

*Friday 13/6/80: Norberto [Fernandes] surrendered to the military command (Korem) escorted by the Bishop of Dili Monsignor Martinho and Father J Falgueiras SJ, Rector of the Seminary of Our Lady of Fatima [in Dare]. Monsignor Martinho urged one of the commanders to protect Norberto, asking that he should not be beaten or killed. The commander agreed to this request and promised not to ill-treat Norberto.*

*A few days later Norberto was taken to Dare. Here, in the hall of the Seminary...members of Hansip beat and tortured him until he was near death.*

*Saturday 21/6/1980: Norberto was put to death and his body thrown into a ravine to the north of the Seminary of Our Lady of Fatima.*

*Wednesday 2/7/1980: Anastacio [Sarmiento] was brutally ill-treated in the yard of the Dare seminary. He was tied to a volleyball post and beaten before a large crowd of people. After that he was taken to a spot in the Seminary garden to be killed. Here a grave had been dug for him because, before his public beating, the Hansip had ordered local people to dig a hole.*

*Thursday 3/7/1980: José Manuel Martins (a relative of Anastacio), Maria Barreto (wife of José Manuel Martins) and Agostinho (a relative of hers) were murdered in Dare Seminary after undergoing severe torture from local Hansip.*

## DETENTION AND TORTURE: MES KOREM AND COMARCA BALIDE

The first wave of large-scale arrests and arbitrary detention in the period 1980- 84 occurred after members of Falintil and clandestine groups attacked the Marabia broadcasting station in Dare (in the hills south of Dili) and the Infantry Battalion 744 barracks in Becora (eastern Dili) on 10 June 1980.

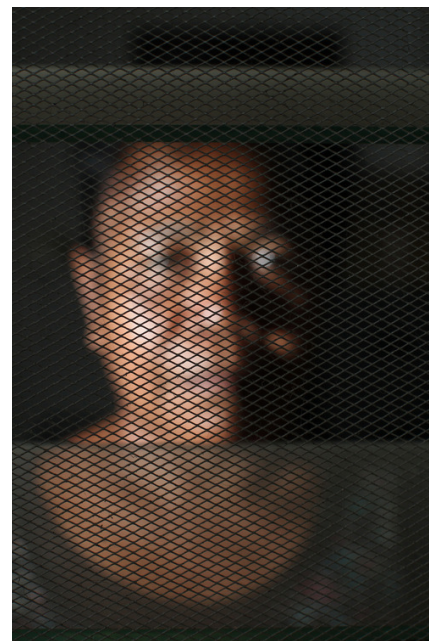
The military was reportedly surprised by the attack and responded by detaining hundreds of known and suspected independence supporters in Dili and in the surrounding districts to find the attackers. It arrested individuals that it had reason to suspect had direct involvement in the attack, members of the clandestine movement it was hoped could provide information, and the “usual suspects”, individuals who were regularly arrested because of their previous connection with Resistance activity.

The treatment of detainees was extremely harsh. David Dias Ximenes, who was arrested after several detainees named him as masterminding the attack, was taken to the Mes Korem. He received electric shocks, was submerged in a tank filled with water and saw a fellow detainee stabbed to death in front of him. His interrogators threatened that he would suffer the same fate if he did not talk. José Gomes Guterres, also held in the Mes Korem, described his experience:

*There were five people present during my interrogation: one to ask questions, and four to beat me when the replies were not clear enough. Whether the answer was true or not didn't make any difference – it had to be the answer they wanted. I was beaten with rifle butts and kicked all over. My feet and hands were bound and they pushed me into a water-tank and held me under for two minutes. Then they'd question me again. If I did not confess the process was repeated. They put two lizards (lafaek rai maran) with sharp teeth on my body, and would pull their tails to make them bite and scratch me. After a month in the Mes Korem, they put me in the Comarca Prison, in the isolation cell, and in September they sent me to Ataúro.*

Those detained after the Marabia attack were held in deplorable conditions. In the Dili Kodim both women and men were forced to strip naked. If a detainee needed to use the toilet, he or she was ordered to go to the toilet naked in front of all other prisoners. Agapito da Conceição Rocha, (arrested in Aileu) described day-to-day conditions in the Comarca:

*I was detained in the Comarca Balide with 14 other prisoners in a small and narrow cell. In the cell you couldn't sleep, you could only stand. Each day we received one meal and drank dirty water. As a result I suffered from diarrhoea that smelt [so bad] that other prisoners couldn't stand it.*



# FORCED DISPLACEMENT: ATAÚRO

The most notorious and the largest of these internment camps was the island of Ataúro (Dili). The Commission received evidence from a wide variety of sources on the number of people held on Ataúro at different times. It has concluded that the displaced and detainee population of the island peaked around September 1982 at just over 4,000, although various sources have put the figure much higher and cumulatively the number of people transported to Ataúro between 1980 and 1984 may well have exceeded 6.000.



The majority of people brought to Ataúro were not political detainees, nor were they armed Resistance fighters. For the most part the people who found themselves on Ataúro were ordinary villagers from areas where Fretilin/Falintil was considered to be active. “Separating the fish from the water” was a phrase often used by Indonesian military authorities to explain the strategy of mass removal of the population.

The former prisoners of Ataúro told the Commission that forced displacement in Ataúro was organised in waves. The first wave took place on 10 July and 3 September 1980, moving those allegedly involved in the guerrilla attack on the Marabia radio and television station and the Battalion 744 barracks in Becora, Dili on 10 June 1980. Bernadino Villanova described his experience to the Commission during its National Public Hearing on Political Imprisonment:

*... In Ataúro I moved freely but I had no contact with my family. We received very mouldy corn. Each family received equal rations, regardless of its size. The people of Ataúro shared their soil with us, even though they were also hungry. We...helped them by working in their fields and received part of the harvest. People also gave us land to work on. I was forced, with the 13 others involved in Marabia case, to work the fields in Beloi which were not very fertile. Armed soldiers kept us under guard. In 1983 I was declared “free” but there was still a very long rope tying me. I decided that I would stay on Ataúro.*

There was little food and fresh water, and starving internees were forced to survive on what wild roots and fruits they could collect around the camp or beg or steal from the local community. They also collected small fish and shellfish on the beach at low tide. According to witnesses, Indonesian officials distributed corn to each family, but the amount and quality was not sufficient for survival.

According to Adelino Soares who later became the local health coordinator of the ICRC's aid programme, between 300 to 350 people died during the early years of their time in Ataúro before the arrival of aid from the ICRC in 1982. This was confirmed by Faustino Gomes de Sousa of Ataúro and currently the village head in Vila (Ataúro, Dili), who as a child witnessed the situation of the deportees:

*I remember seeing 5 to 6 children dying every day from diarrhoea. They were all buried at the back of the barracks. There used to be gravestones to mark their graves but a flood and landslide in 1998 washed all the graves away.*

## WOMEN

In 2013, Asosiasaun Chega Ba Ita (Acbit) documented the stories of women who suffered in the aftermath of the Marabia incident. These women were detained, interrogated and tortured. They lost family members, were forced to 'entertain' Indonesian soldiers, raped and sexually humiliated, and even forced into sexual and domestic slavery through forcible 'marriage' to soldiers for the duration of their tour in Baucau.

One survivor was only 17 when she was captured by the Indonesian military. She and six other women were tortured daily: stripped and forced to sit in water tanks, given electric shocks, and sexually abused. Some detainees were killed. After three months, she was briefly released only to be she was detained again at her house and transported to Atauro with family members. They were forced to work on a road, the women collecting rocks from the coast as the men broke them up. She remembers, "we had to break our backs to work for food and drink."



## CHILDREN

During the 1980s, clandestine networks expanded rapidly. Children became involved in the networks' activities as *estafeta* or messengers. This placed children at increasing risk of capture and harm by the military. The earliest reported clandestine child fatalities occurred after the Resistance attacks in Marabia and Becora, Dili, on 10 June 1980. Following the attacks, the Indonesian authorities launched a wave of arrests and detentions.



Filomeno Ximenes reported that among those who were arrested and disappeared or who were killed while in custody, were three prisoners aged 15-17 who disappeared from the Comarca prison. They were Sancho Sarmento (17 years) and two brothers, Cesmundo (15 years) and Edmundo (16 years), identified as members of the clandestine movement. According to Filomeno, they had been arrested by Kodim 1627 in the Old Market area of Dili.

After Terezinha's de Jesus father was arrested on 10 June 1980, the military came back to arrest her. Only 15 years old, despite both threats and promises, she revealed nothing, and they took Terezinha, her mother and her older sister to Atauro by ferry. On the ferry, they saw her father and uncle, who had been imprisoned for three months and were tied up and in terrible condition. The family was held on the island for four years. She says:

*There is still no justice for my family, or for me. No one from the government has ever come and asked us anything. This is the first time I have told my story. I really want the government to pay attention to me, my family and to all the other victims.*

Produced by:

