



New Round of Elections in Timor-Leste Should be Free and Fair

(Dili/Bangkok, 2 May 2018) – Timor Leste will conduct a new round of Parliamentary Elections on 12 May 2018, nine months after the Parliamentary Elections of 2017. As last year’s voting results did not provide a clear winner. It is the first time, since the country became independent, that such a measure has been necessary. The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), together with its local members, the Judicial System Monitoring Program (JSMP) and the Association for Law, Human Rights and Justice (HAK) call on all political parties to assure these elections will be free and fair to assure democracy in the country is upheld.

We acknowledge the tensions between the Government’s minority coalition and the parliamentary majority alliance (AMP), which has led to the current political gridlock. After having formed a minority Government, which held only 30 out of 65 seats in the National Parliament, it proved impossible to pass the proposed national programme and budget.

On 20 November 2018, a vote of no confidence was submitted by the AMP against the Government. As a result, President Francisco Guterres decided to dissolve Parliament, and call for new elections. The idea being that this move would give the people of Timor-Leste full ownership of their future.

As this situation is the first of its kind in Timor-Leste, we are concerned about the possible implications it might bring. Concerns relate to: the stagnation of the country has neither the nation programme nor an approved budget to run the Government; possible security issues related to clashes between political parties; and the potential impact of the volatile situation to human rights and civic space on the ground. Without a functioning Government, problems experienced by vulnerable groups are left unaddressed. People are also concerned about a potential repeat of the current situation after the new elections, as some parties might not be satisfied with the results.

Therefore, we call on all political parties, the Provedoria dos Direitos Humanos e Justicia (PDHJ, the National Human Rights Commission of Timor-Leste), the National Election Commission, and civil society in the country to collaborate to ensure respectful election campaign in the coming weeks and free and fair elections on 12 May 2018. We particularly call on all political parties to respect the eventual vote and decision made by people, and for them to collaborate in ensuring the political stability of the country. Political interests should be put aside. Only through listening to and understanding each other, can the principle of participation of all be upheld, and the diverse people of the

country be united. After the turbulent history Timor-Leste has had, that is all that those who have the good of the people at heart can wish for.

About FORUM-ASIA:

FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 58 member organisations in 19 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratisation.

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