

## UM 8

### **URGENT RESOLUTION FROM EAST TIMOR**

### **TO THE DELGATES OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF JOURNALISTS**

8 June 2016

#### **Criminal defamation charges against Timorese journalists**

This Congress of the International Federation of Journalists meeting in Angers:

Noting with concern that:

The Prime Minister of Timor-Leste has taken out defamation charges against Timor Post journalist, Raimundo Oki, and former Editor of the Timor Post, Laurencu Martins Vincente.

Such lawsuits could result in criminal charges and subsequent prison sentences, putting into further question the future of a free and democratic media in this newly independent country.

And observing that:

The defamation charges surround a factual error in Raimundo Oki's reporting on November 10, 2015, about a government tendering process made when Timor-Leste's Prime Minister, Rui Maria de Araujo, was advisor to Timor-Leste Minister of Finance. In response, the Timor Post has printed Mr Araujo's comments that deny any illegal activity regarding tender process as a front-page article on 17 November, and a further clarification of Oki's report was published in its 18 November 2015 edition. The publishing of a correction by the Timor Post has adequately covered the right of reply in accordance Article 34 of Timor-Leste's Press Law.

Since April 11, 2016, the case has sat in the State Prosecutor's office, with a decision to lay criminal charges pending.

Congress declares

The fact that in Timor-Leste, criminal law allows the investigation and prosecution of journalists for inaccuracy or what is regarded as "unfair" reporting is, by itself, unacceptable in any democratic country. It is all the more disappointing that Timor-Leste, a democracy that was fought long and hard for by its people, has such laws.

Timor-Leste's democracy should be strong enough to permit a free and robust press, and this case highlights the on-going crack down on the country's media freedom and freedom of expression.

And calls on the Timor-Leste government to immediately withdraw the charges and revert the case to the Timor-Leste Press Council.

Congress congratulates its affiliates in East Timor and the IFJ Asia Pacific for its strong campaign in response to this attack on press freedom and directs the General Secretary to convey the strong concerns of the international journalist community to the Timor-Leste government.

Jose Belo, Timor Leste Press Union

David Hugo Da Silva, Timor Leste Journalists Association

Eko Maryadi, Aliansi Journalis Independen, Indonesia

Um Sarin, Cambodian Association for the Protection of Journalists

Sumeth Somkanae, NUJ Thailand

Schave de Rosario, NUJ Malaysia

Ryan Rosauo, NUJ Philippines

On behalf of the South East Asia Journalists Unions (SEAJU)