



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PARLIAMENT HOUSE  
CANBERRA, ACT 2600  
TEL 721211

15 October 1975.

The Hon. E.G. Whitlam, Q.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister,  
Parliament House,  
CANBERRA, A.C.T.



Dear Gough,

The South Australian Branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom has sent me a copy of their letter to you in which the request is made for the Government to give moral and practical support to the right of self-determination to the people of East Timor. I write in support of this view.

My understanding is that the conservative UDT launched an abortive coup, probably with the connivance of Indonesia. The strength of the response by Fretilin was sufficient to indicate that they have strong support amongst the people of East Timor. It appears to have been sufficient to force the remnants of UDT to withdraw to Indonesian Timor. Meanwhile, according to our colleagues Arthur Gietzelt and Ken Fry, who recently visited the territory, UDT and Apodeti prisoners are being treated with moderation and restraint.

I concur with your view that the Portuguese should negotiate with all three parties in East Timor, with a view to a political settlement. However, UDT and Apodeti have reportedly declined to have any dialogue with the Portuguese. Only Fretilin is prepared to deal with the Portuguese, and indeed Fretilin evidently wishes the Portuguese authorities to return and continue the comparatively orderly process of decolonisation which was interrupted by the attempted coup.

However, I am sure you will agree that the hopes of enlisting the interest of the Portuguese are fading.

.../2.

In the circumstances, time does not appear to be on the side of the Timorese. It now appears that the Indonesian Government is promoting an incursion from its own territory in Timor into Portuguese Timor, and apparently hopes to establish a quisling government in any such area captured. Recently, following the occupation of the border town of Batugade, the Caucus Foreign Affairs Committee discussed this situation with the Foreign Minister. Senator Willesee told the committee that the government was unwilling to publicly condemn these activities of Indonesia as this might lose any influence we might have with them.

The "National Times" of this week alleges that the activities have actually been sanctioned by the Australian Government. In answer to a question I put to Senator Willesee at the Caucus Meeting of 14/10/75, I was pleased to receive a categorical denial of this. However, to the world it appears that we are tacitly accepting Indonesian aggression and it might well be asked how far are the Indonesians going to continue their present activities before the Australian Government protests publicly.

I strongly urge that, in accordance with a previous resolution of the Caucus Foreign Affairs Committee, the Government advise the Indonesian Government that any Indonesian occupation of East Timor would be regarded very unfavourably in Australia and could lead to pressure to cut off Australian aid.

Senator Willesee has assured us that this view has been conveyed to the Indonesian Government. But it is surely time that these views were now stated publicly. If we have any influence with the Indonesians, it is time that it was used effectively.

Yours sincerely,



(RICHIE GUN)  
M.H.R. for Kingston