

## Timor's truth time bomb

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A report about human rights atrocities will test the delicate relationship between Dili and Jakarta, writes Lindsay Murdoch.



No reconciliation without justice ... Ana Lemos was raped and killed by militia.

Photo: *SUPPLIED ZZZ*

ANA Lemos was a prize catch. By the time pro-Jakarta militia paraded her through her home town of Gleno in the coffee-growing mountains south of Dili she had been raped so often that her breasts and vagina were black and her skin was peeling.

One man had even raped her in front of her mother, Ines Lemos, and two of her young children. "Why doesn't he just kill Ana? Why does he bring Ana, already swollen, her body full of bruises and treat her like an animal in front of us?" Lemos pleaded with other militia.

It was in the cool early morning of September 13, 1999, when a militia commander known as Bola Guling came to get 34-year-old Ana, who had dared speak publicly in favour of East Timor's freedom and who had dared work for the United Nations organising a referendum on independence.

"Mama, I will be killed for sure by him," Ana whispered to her mother before pressing money into her hand.

"This money is to look after my children," she said before being silently led away.

They found Ana's naked and mutilated body several days later.

In her deeply religious and conservative culture, it took a lot of courage for 63-year-old Lemos to testify at a hearing of East Timor's Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation about what happened to her daughter.

Unlike some of East Timor's leaders, including President Xanana Gusmao, Lemos is now demanding that her daughter's killers, who are in Indonesia, be arrested and prosecuted for crimes against humanity.

"As a mother, I want the killers arrested, [there] can be no other way," she told the *Herald* at her mud-brick house in the mountains where she cares for Ana's three children.

The commission's 2500-page report, in which Ana Lemos is referred to by the code ZE, stands to become the historic record of East Timor's bloody struggle for statehood.

But East Timorese still don't know what it says because Gusmao, apparently worried about upsetting the tiny nation's precarious relations with Indonesia, has not yet allowed it to be released, even though he received it on October 31 last year.

Its findings, many of which Indonesia refutes, include that 18,600 non-combatant East Timorese were killed or disappeared and at least 84,000 more died as a direct result of displacement policies during Jakarta's brutal 24-year rule over the former Portuguese colony.

It contains exhaustive evidence of widespread and systematic rape and torture by the Indonesian military that was documented during more than three years of hearings where the testimonies of thousands of witnesses and victims were documented.

The report concludes that there is credible and extensive evidence that planning for, and knowledge of, a "scorched earth" policy in the days after the independence vote extended to the highest echelons of the Indonesian military.

The policy led to towns, villages and churches being razed, the population brutalised and the forced relocation of 250,000 people to Indonesian West Timor.

The report recommends that the UN Security Council set up a tribunal "should other measures be deemed to have failed to deliver a sufficient measure of justice and Indonesia persists in obstructing justice".

But the Timorese don't escape without criticism. The report attributes 10 per cent of the deaths to internecine violence among the four main East Timorese parties and reprisals against those who collaborated with the Indonesian military.

The report has the potential to divide the nation and could open old wounds between domestic political groups, observers in Dili say.

The Catholic Church, community groups, opposition parties and thousands of victims are certain to increase pressure on the Government to push for an international tribunal when the report is eventually disseminated.

However, Gusmao and the East Timorese Government have made clear they don't want the report to disrupt relations with Jakarta - where the loss of East Timor is still an extremely sensitive political issue. Gusmao and Indonesia's President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, are scheduled to meet in Indonesia on February 17.

While rejecting many of the report's findings, Indonesian Government spokesmen said Jakarta wanted to "strengthen already close relations" between the two countries.

Gusmao and Yudhoyono are backing the truth and friendship commission set up by the Indonesian and East Timor governments to investigate human rights violations in 1999.

But the commission has been widely criticised because it will not have the powers to prosecute anybody.

Joao Goncalves, vice-president of East Timor's opposition Social Democratic Party, warns the country cannot have reconciliation with Indonesia "unless it is combined with justice for the victims".

"My party strongly believes that those people who have committed crimes of genocide have got to be brought to justice," he says. "And we believe it is also in Indonesia's best interests to see that the perpetrators are dealt with."

Even before the report is officially handed this week to the Catholic Church, the most powerful institution in a country where 90 per cent of people are Catholic, church representatives are warning they will not accept Gusmao's acquiescence to Indonesia on amnesty for Indonesians who committed atrocities.

The director of the church's Justice and Peace Commission, Martinho Gusmao, says the Catholic Church wants the international community to set up a tribunal.

"This is not just a problem between East Timor and Indonesia. They were crimes against humanity and this is a big international issue," Father Martinho says.

"The church intends to flex its muscles on this issue. How can there be justice if amnesties are granted to those responsible?"

He says the church will inform the people that the Government did not wish to press for justice.

Gusmao, a revered former guerilla leader, said he respects the church's stand but insists as head of state "let us not waste time in kneeling ourselves before the wailing wall".

Gusmao, in a letter accompanying the report, to be sent to 12 embassies in Dili including Australia's, says "I do not agree with all the commission's recommendations" although he was "pleased" with its work.

"We must respect the courage of the Indonesians in accepting our independence and not disrupt their progress towards democratisation by demanding formal justice," he was quoted recently as saying.

Gusmao tells the story of how he used to cry for the men he lost in battle. But then a platoon commander came to him and told him to stop crying. "Now your duty is not to cry for everyone who dies," the commander said. "Take care of us that are still alive."

Gusmao says "this is a good lesson in how to look at the current situation".

East Timor's Foreign Minister, Jose Ramos Horta, told the *Herald* that Gusmao never intended to suppress the report and was planning a series of workshops and seminars to disseminate its findings across the country.

But Ramos Horta, a Nobel laureate, said he had not yet had the courage to read all of it.

"I lost three brothers, a sister remains profoundly traumatised and angry. I never asked my mother or brothers or sisters what they went through because I don't want to go through the whole ordeal," he says.

Ramos Horta says the "bits of the report I have read confirm what I have known for many, many years about what happened here, a terrible indictment of the Indonesian army and of Indonesian society".

"And as a society they have to deal with the truth of the 24 years of Indonesian occupation in East Timor."

Ramos Horta says he and Gusmao agree that before the East Timorese demand action be taken against the Indonesians, they must "acknowledge our own past mistakes".

"Before Indonesia ever invaded this country there was a civil war," Ramos Horta says. "The first casualties were among East Timorese. The first weapons used were not Indonesian weapons."

The people of Gleno have built a monument to honour Ana. Her full name was Ana Xavier Conceicao Lemos, an independence hero.

Her mother likes to show visitors to her house a photograph of Ana as a smiling, confident young mother.

When she did for the *Herald*, Ana's 10 year-old son, Ferdenco, bursts into tears. "She was just a beautiful person," Ines Lemos said. "It's so hard when we think of her."

The people of Gleno knew that Ana's fate was probably sealed when she spoke at a public meeting early in 1999, daring to ask why the Indonesian army was not neutral in referendum campaigning and why Timorese were being set against Timorese.

They don't understand how the United Nations, which recruited and employed her, putting her at greater risk, could have abandoned her and is unwilling to bring her killers to justice.

Helene van Klinken, an Australian academic whose research contributed to the report, befriended Ana when she went to the Ermera district in June 1999 to work as a UN political affairs officer.

She recalls the last words that Ana wrote to her: "I hope at last the truth will always win, radiating light and hope, giving meaning to struggle. This is my prayer."