



**P R I M E
M I N I S T E R**

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE,
DR RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO,
AT THE ORDER OF TIMOR-LESTE MEDAL AWARD CEREMONY**

**New York
30 September 2015**

Your Excellencies

Professor Noam Chomsky

Ambassador Robert Van Lierop

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very honoured to be here today addressing such illustrious guests to undertake such a noble task.

His Excellency the President of the Republic, Taur Matan Ruak, has honoured me with the task of awarding of the Collar of the Order of Timor-Leste to Professor Noam Chomsky and the Medal of the Order of Timor-Leste to Ambassador Robert Van Lierop, in recognition of their tireless contribution to Timor-Leste's struggle for National Liberation.

The Order of Timor-Leste is the highest honour awarded by Timor-Leste. It is a way for our Nation and our State to thank and acknowledge those whose initiatives and actions benefited our people.

Consequently it is important to recall that some years ago, when we were fighting for the right to rule ourselves, the international community took our side and made our voice and our struggle their own.

Our struggle had several fronts. While some resisted in the Armed Resistance, such as "Maun Bo'ot"oXanana Gusmão, others were waging a diplomatic battle, including our former President of the Republic and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Dr José Ramos-Horta. Thus the world came to learn of our struggle and our determination to be an independent country and to live in freedom.

Throughout the world, in every continent, we relied on the support and solidarity of many politicians, activists, journalists, civil society organizations and other citizens.

Here in the United States of America we also relied on the support of some congresspersons who used their strong influence throughout our 24-year struggle.

Out of the many, we are here today to acknowledge two friends of Timor-Leste. Each one, moved by their values and their belief in the respect for civil and human rights, were tireless in supporting our cause, both in the United States and throughout the world.

Noam Chomsky, a renowned professor of linguistics, social critic and author of dozens of books and essays on US foreign policy, was always involved with the self-rule of Timor-Leste and was much more than a mere activist of our cause. He brought the plight of Timor-Leste as a result of the Indonesian invasion to the eyes of the world and made countless appeals to the consciousness of the international community.

Noam Chomsky presented several statements at the 4th Special Committee on Decolonisation and at the General Assembly of the United Nations in favour of Timor-Leste. He also published countless editorials and other texts on the subject, going as far as to make strong criticisms against the US media for not reporting on the situation of Timor-Leste. He even paid for the travel arrangements of several refugees from Lisbon to the United States so that the US media could listen to their stories.

All of these actions had a clear impact and helped bring our case to light, thus raising the awareness of the international community in the United States and in other countries, which knew very little about Timor-Leste.

These actions reduced ignorance and lack of knowledge, while contributing to increase international solidarity. Professor Chomsky is a nationally and internationally renowned intellectual and scholar, who for more than two decades advocated for freedom, justice and the right of the Timorese people to fundamental principles.

Even today, after all this time, Timor-Leste continues to rely on his invaluable support.

Your Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In addition to being a filmmaker and attorney, Ambassador Robert Van Lierop, another good and old friend of Timor-Leste, was an extraordinary political activist in the anticolonial struggle of the PALOP, the Portuguese-Speaking African Countries, particularly Angola and Mozambique.

And it was precisely through Mozambique that Ambassador Robert Van Lierop became aware of the cause of Timor-Leste. As soon as he learned of the Timorese struggle for liberation and of the resistance war being waged against Indonesian occupation, Van Lierop dedicated himself to supporting those who fought in the diplomatic front, even making his own house available to them.

Although a US citizen, Ambassador Robert was the Permanent Representative of Vanuatu in the United Nations for more than a decade, campaigning inter alia against Apartheid and in favour of the decolonisation of Timor-Leste. He dedicated himself as an intellectual and legal officer, speaking several times before the United Nations, both in the 4th Committee and in the General Assembly, so as to appeal to the international community.

Your Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are in the presence of two great men whose values lead them to defend the individual, the community and humankind itself. Both have displayed enormous solidarity.

Their biographies, which we have summarised here, are evidence of how solidarity also helps the world to succeed and to fight for causes such as dignity and fundamental human rights, even if the international agendas seem busy with other priorities.

Professor Noam Chomsky and Ambassador Robert Van Lierop, your actions were crucial to our cause of independence, and for them we are very grateful, but there is a final step we need to take to achieve our full sovereignty. That step is the permanent delimitation of our maritime boundaries with Australia and Indonesia. We continue to rely on our reliable friends the defense of the development of Timor-Leste.

Thank you very much.

Dr Rui Maria de Araújo
New York, 30 September 2015