



SPOKESPERSON SIXTH CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



**MEDIA
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Government of Timor-Leste offers condolences on the passing of Mohamed Abdelaziz and expresses solidarity for the Sahrawi People

The Government of Timor-Leste offers condolences on the passing of Mohamed Abdelaziz, President of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic and champion of the fight for the self-determination of the Sahrawi people. Abdelaziz died on Tuesday after a long battle with illness and before seeing a resolution to the 41-year struggle for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

The Government also reaffirms its solidarity with the Sahrawi people, a solidarity arising from common years of struggle. In 2002, President Abdelaziz visited Timor-Leste and declared “the people of East Timor and the people of Western Sahara are twin peoples” who have “endured the same suffering, made enormous sacrifices, resisted and struggled side by side for their rights to be respected by expansionist neighbors.”

Upon the restoration of Timor-Leste’s independence in 2002 diplomatic relations were immediately established with the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic. On the occasion of Timor-Leste’s welcome as a member of the United Nations, then President H.E. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão called for “the resumed implementation of the UN plan for a referendum on the Western Sahara's self-determination” noting that “only a just, free and democratic vote like the one held in East Timor can bring to this unjust situation to an end.” This referendum, called for in UN resolutions, is yet to occur.

Timor-Leste accorded full diplomatic representation to the Embassy of the ‘Saharawi Republic’ in Dili, 2010 and continues to raise the plight of the people of Western Sahara. Last September in the United Nations General Assembly, Prime Minister, H.E. Dr. Rui Maria Araújo, again reminded that “the Saharawi people ... continue to be denied their fundamental rights.”

Spokesperson for the Sixth Constitutional Government, Minister of State Agio Pereira noted “at the time of the passing of President Mohamed Abdelaziz Ezzedine, we offer our condolences and reaffirm our strong and enduring solidarity with the people of Western Sahara as they continue to struggle for their inalienable right to self-determination.” **ENDS**



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