



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

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE  
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE  
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO  
ORDER OF SOLIDARITY MEDAL AWARDS CEREMONY  
SATURDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER 2014  
QUEENS HALL PARLIAMENT HOUSE VICTORIA**

**Melbourne**

**20 September 2014**

Excellencies,  
Honoured guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here in Melbourne surrounded by so many familiar faces and the local Timorese community.

As you know, we are here to honour some outstanding individuals who helped us on our long journey to independence -Fabio Cavadini, Jill Jolliffe and John Sinnott are with us today.

We are also here to honour the memory of Michelle Turner who sadly passed before she could see an independent Timor-Leste.

Today allows us to show our deep appreciation and the respect we have for the contribution of these individuals to our struggle for independence.

During the darkest hours of our resistance so many had abandoned us. If it was not for the selfless work of our friends in the solidarity movement we would have had trouble continuing our struggle. We will always remember that so called 'ordinary' Australians stood with us. Australians from all walks of life – journalists, social workers, teachers, unionists, mothers, fathers, students - each one had a role in ensuring that our cause was heard.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The world is said to be divided into 'realists' and 'idealists'. According to the realists, international relations are driven by power. According to the idealists, international relations should be guided by agreed principles of justice.

The fact that I am here today, as the democratically elected Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, is proof that sometimes the realists get it wrong - that the powerful do not always prevail over the weak. It is proof that, in the end, good will prevail and that we must continue to work in solidarity for what we know in our hearts of be right.

The reason I am here today owes an enormous amount to the efforts of some fine Australian idealists - Michelle Turner, John Sinnott, Jill Jolliffe and Fabio Cavadini, and other idealists like them from around the world.

While the people of Timor fought a bitter guerilla war, a war of resistance, our friends in the international community fought a diplomatic and political struggle.

Our strategy was to fight not only in our land, but to also fight internationally, for the hearts and minds of the people of the world.

One international battleground was the United Nations – an organisation dreamed up by idealists following the Second World War. My dear friend Jose Ramos-Horta, who has recently been awarded Australia's highest honour, led our campaign in the United Nations. Thanks to his efforts, and the many nations that supported us, our cause stayed on the United Nations agenda for 24 years and eventually the United Nations paved the road to our independence.

Our other international weapon was people - people like Michelle, Fabio, Jill and John who were prepared to take up our cause because they believed a great injustice had been done to our people.

As we have heard, Michelle Turner was introduced to our cause by her grandfather who was an Australian soldier kept alive by Timorese during the Second World War. She was drawn to record the story of Australia's veterans who had served in Timor-Leste, and then the personal stories of the suffering endured by many Timorese.

Jill Jolliffe has devoted her life to the Timorese cause since she was in Dili just before the Balibo Five journalists were murdered in 1975. She has interviewed hundreds of people, written countless articles and books, all aimed at keeping our story alive and seeking justice for our people and the Balibo Five.

Fabio took our struggle to the world through the medium of film. He was part of the team that made the first Australian film to comprehensively examine the terrible death toll and the resolute resistance in my country following the Indonesian invasion in 1975.

John Sinnott helped run the Australia-East Timor Association. He sold books, addressed political meetings, and raised money to support political prisoners in Dili – of which I was a direct beneficiary.

None of these people had to do what they did. It wasn't their families being torn apart, being starved or killed. It wasn't their country that was invaded. And yet they chose to act, to call out to the world, each in their own way, about the great injustice that was occurring in my country.

I am humbled by their courage and their commitment. The world needs more people like them.

We can also say that their support represented the Australian people who always believed in our cause. The same Australia that accepted so many of our people as refugees and that today continues to work with us in friendship to improve the lives of our people.

Friends, our people's struggle goes on. Achieving the restoration of our Independence turned out to be but the first step in achieving true freedom for our people – a freedom from poverty and the freedom to realise our full potential as a nation and as a people.

We cannot do this alone. Today, we continue to need the help of our international friends. We still need you to stand in solidarity with us as we develop Timor-Leste.

Many Australians are working with us to bring better education, health care and food security to our people. They are some of our most important partners in our future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Together we have shown the world that ideals matter - that sometimes the weak can prevail against the strong – that idealism can triumph over realism.

We cannot thank you enough for what you have done for our people.

And now, thanks in large part to your efforts, our people live in freedom and peace.

This award symbolises our gratitude and our thanks.

Obrigado barak.

20 September 2014  
Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão