



SPOKESPERSON SIXTH CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



**MEDIA
RELEASE**

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Honouring Professor Benedict Anderson

American scholar and good friend of Timor-Leste, Professor Benedict Anderson passed away in Batu, Indonesia yesterday at the age of 79 years. Mr. Anderson was a Professor Emeritus of International Studies at Cornell University and the head of its Indonesian program.

During Timor-Leste's struggle for self-determination Professor Anderson was a rare and powerful voice exposing the suffering experienced by the Timorese people. He famously debunked US State Department claims made in the 1978 Congressional hearings that Timorese political prisoners were being released. At this time he also revealed the catastrophic consequences of the 1977 starvation famines when diplomats within the US system were "turning a blind eye". On this point he utterly destroyed the testimony of the US Ambassador to Indonesia in the 1980 Congressional hearings, who having seen the suffering of the Timorese at first hand, had never proposed that the State Department should offer humanitarian aid. "It is rather peculiar" Anderson said "to have an ambassador coming back to his own country to lie on behalf of a foreign government."

The writings of Professor Anderson in the years to follow helped to explain to the international community the failure of the Indonesian attempt to "absorb" Timor-Leste, the reasons behind the brutal approach of the TNI and the extraordinary growth and consolidation of Timorese nationalism. Nationalism was a focal point of his study and his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origins of Nationalism* has become a landmark publication in this field.

Spokesperson for the Sixth Constitutional Government, Minister of State Agio Pereira noted "Professor Anderson was an academic with carm. He engaged deeply with many Timorese people over decades showing genuine empathy in his search to discover our thinking and to understand our reality. He was fearless in presenting the truth he uncovered, even when that was an inconvenient truth. For these attributes and for his great respect for our struggle we remember him with affection and honour him at this time. The Government conveys deep condolences to his family, colleagues and friends."**ENDS**



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