



SPOKESPERSON SIXTH CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



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Timor-Leste pays its respects on the passing of Mário Soares, a friend of Timor

The Government of Timor-Leste, on behalf of the nation, conveys its deep regret on hearing of the passing of former President and Prime Minister of Portugal, H.E. Mário Soares.

In addition to his remarkable role in steering the democratic reconstruction of Portugal after the Salazar Regime, and later promoting Portugal's place in broader European politics, Soares was consistently a staunch and outspoken supporter of Timor-Leste's right to self-determination. For his solidarity and unswerving commitment the people of Timor-Leste count Mário Soares as a great friend and will remember him with great respect and affection.

In 1986 when 'the Timor issue' was fading in European consciousness newly inaugurated President Soares took to the floor of the European Parliament and in an impassioned plea asked those gathered to "demonstrate the attention and interest that a problem of this gravity requires" and declared that "Portugal is not disposed to abandon East Timor to its fate." Shortly after the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for respect for our right to self-determination. This was a milestone in reviving international support for the struggle. His determination to see democracy, justice and the protection of human rights in Timor-Leste intensified in the years to follow. He was particularly outspoken after the Santa Cruz massacre in 1991 and used his position to spread news of the conditions in Timor amongst leaders, monarchs and academics across Europe.

In 2016 Mário Soares was conferred with the highest award of Timorese State, the Grand Collar of the Order of Timor-Leste, in heartfelt recognition for "solidarity and active support" in Timor-Leste's struggle for independence. The award was presented by the President of the Republic, H.E. Taur Matan Ruak, in Lisbon, and accepted by the son of H.E. Mário Soares, Mr. João Soares. At the time the President highlighted the "genuine and brotherly solidarity" of former President Soares and President Jorge Sampaio who was also awarded.

Government Spokesperson, Minister of State Agio Pereira, passed on condolences to the family and friends of former President Soares and noted "Mário Soares will always be remembered by the Timorese people with great warmth and affection. Out of his deep commitment to human rights, justice and solidarity flowed a passionate and relentless advocacy for the rights of the Timorese people. Far from Lisbon, here amongst the villages and institutions of our Nation the impact of his friendship endures." **ENDS**



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