



Carmelite Friars of Australia and Timor-Leste

MISSION COORDINATOR UPDATE 30.06.06

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We have been deeply saddened over recent months when listening to media reports, chatting to friends and watching such a complex, critical and volatile situation unfold in Timor-Leste.

The following update is some of the Carmelite story in Timor-Leste.

Over recent months, as each of you would know, there has been continual chaos in Dili. It seemed as if nobody was in charge of the country and nobody knew what was going on.

“The causes of the current disaster in Dili are complex, multiple and messy. East Timor’s best leaders, Gusmao and Ramos Horta, appear mesmerized and impotent, caught in currents of intrigue they can’t identify or control.” Tom Hyland, The Age June 11, 2006

The above happenings filled the Carmelite men and women, together with so many other Timorese people, with a deep fear that tapped into the trauma of past experiences. The ordinary Timorese people do not understand the power struggles that are happening especially between eastern and western side of Timor-Leste.

All the Carmelite places in Dili are still intact and the Carmelites themselves are safe. They have refugees at each of their places whom they are helping to feed and support. During the day the refugee men have been returning to check their homes but the women and children have stayed at the Carmelite refuges. The Carmelite Sisters have larger numbers of refugees as their places are bigger.

Earlier in the month of June, the Carmelites only had rice left for themselves and the refugees. They have now found places where they can buy more rice and other foods. The Carmelite sisters and men are sharing their resources together.



When the violence first started the roads out of Dili were packed with frightened people.

All work on the new Hera building has now stopped. Construction will probably not begin again for six months as the workers will have been so emotionally effected. The building has not been monitored for a couple of weeks as the humanitarian situation is the bigger need at present.

In Zumalai the Carmelites have tried to continue life as normal but the people have been very anxious to receive news of what is happening in Dili. The first year Carmelite men who were in Zumalai had moved to Maubara because they were so frightened about the lorosae (east) and loromonu (west) divisions that were occurring. They have now returned to Zumalai.

Australian soldiers have moved to Suai which is only twenty minutes from Zumalai by car. This has made the people in the area feel much more secure.

As a result of the crisis in Dili, thousands of people have moved to the outlying areas. Many who come from the remote south of Zumalai have also returned. The humanitarian crisis has now spread throughout Timor-Leste.

Father Wayne will visit Timor-Leste next Wednesday 5th July in order to show solidarity with the Carmelite men and women. He wants to be with them, the refugees living in the Carmelite places and the people of Timor-Leste to help them in their process of feeling secure again but he knows that this will take a long time.

The Australian Carmelites have been phoning and emailing Timor-Leste in Dili each day in order to assure them that they continue to be in our thoughts and prayer as they again experience the trauma of violence and displacement.

Rosemary Pattenson

Timor-Leste Mission Coordinator