Building Democracy, Sustaining Decolonisation: East Timorese Refugees and Aid Dynamics in Portugal (1970s–1990s)

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Abstract

The Carnation Revolution in Portugal (25 April 1974) was sustained by the so-called 'Three Ds' motto: *Democratisation*, *Decolonisation* and *Development*. Over the next few years, the Portuguese authorities determined that the second 'D' had been accomplished in an 'exemplary' way. Nonetheless, the decolonisation process in several former Portuguese colonies was complex and violent. In the case of East Timor, it was postponed until the end of the century after a civil war and Indonesia's invasion of the territory.

This paper examines the interplay between the democratisation process in Portugal and the decolonisation process in East Timor, focusing on three key aspects. First, it examines how the Portuguese authorities addressed the East Timorese people's right to self-determination within the new regime's approach to upholding and respecting international norms and institutions. Second, it examines the humanitarian efforts undertaken by the Portuguese state to assist East Timorese refugees arriving in Portugal following the invasion of the East Timor territory. Third, it analyses the involvement of the East Timorese in the process of democratic consolidation of the host society, particularly through civic participation and the organisation of associations to advocate for their right to self-determination, as well as the attainment of fundamental rights enshrined in the new Portuguese Constitution.

Hence, this paper showcases the development of humanitarian practices and human rights discourses associated with the East Timor crisis through a multilevel analysis that connects local initiatives with international demands. In so doing, it unravels how the interwoven processes of decolonisation and democratisation influenced the (re)making of Portuguese civil society while complexifying linear narratives about the Portuguese 'success story' after April 1974.

Keywords: East Timor, refugees, humanitarianism, self-determination, human rights, democratisation.

Introduction

Prompting the 'third wave' of democratic transitions (Huntington, 1991), Portugal's 'Carnation Revolution' of 25 April 1974 epitomised the uprisings against the domestic and imperial oppression imposed by the Estado Novo regime. The revolution was underpinned by the 'Three Ds' – Democratisation, Decolonisation and Development – motto and pillars of the Armed Forces Movement (Movimento das Forças Armadas – MFA) programme. Consequently, contrary to other Southern European transition experiences, Portuguese democratisation was intrinsically linked to decolonisation.[i] Intertwined in this duality was the humanitarian crisis triggered by the sudden exodus of approximately seven hundred thousand people from across the former empire to Portugal.[ii]

This exodus has primarily been studied in association with the 'return' of Portuguese settlers and their families to the former metropole, the largest movement of its kind along similar migratory paths (Peralta, 2022: 2; Eldridge *et al.*, 2022). The pressure of this 8% demographic increase, in a context of profound social, political and economic change, has been addressed by more and more scholars, interested, on the one hand, in the socio-economic consequences for the transforming regime (Amaral, 2023; Delaunay, 2022; Lourenço, 2018; Silva, 1984) and, on the other, in the experiences of the *retornados* or 'returnees' (see, among others, Peralta, 2022; Kalter, 2022; George, 2023). What is still missing, however, is a serious analysis encompassing the humanitarian dimension of the crisis and its connections with the democratisation process. The initial efforts made in this direction also point to the need to go beyond the *retornados* experience to identify and include the struggles of refugees from former colonies in this context (Guardião and Jerónimo, 2021).

This article takes up this call by analysing the intersections between humanitarianism, human rights and decolonisation (Thomson, 2018) in the former metropole, and concentrating on a particular subset of incomers within the broader influx: East Timorese refugees.[iii] This group was selected for multiple reasons. Firstly, it allows a critique of what the democratic regime continued to present as a rapid and exemplary decolonisation process. Unlike the decolonisation of the African colonies, in East Timor

the process went on until 1999, following Indonesia's annexation of the territory in December 1975 without the promised referendum on self-determination.[iv] Thus, secondly, the East Timorese refugees provide a sui generis group for (re)thinking refugeeness and refugeedom (Gatrell *et al.*, 2021) in the context of the crisis in Portugal. Their flight to Portugal was a result of both incomplete decolonisation and the invasion. This intertwined cause meant they did not fall under either the 1951 Refugee Convention or the new nationality law. Hence, contrary to other refugee groups, international humanitarian relief to the East Timorese was limited. Thirdly, while the East Timorese were among the destitute groups who received humanitarian aid from the Portuguese State, they were not integrated into the welfare development schemes envisioned for the general Portuguese population. The relationship between their suffering and their unheeded pursuit of self-determination prompted a series of targeted humanitarian and human rights advocacy efforts, embedded in the activist spirit of the time (Simpson, 2004; Moyn 2010, 2018; O'Sullivan 2014, 2021; Eckel and Moyn 2014). Started by East Timorese organisations and activists and Portuguese Christian advocates during the democratic transition, numerous initiatives continued to be developed during the phase of democratic consolidation. In many instances, they were part of broader changes in the humanitarian field, linked with activism strategies that the *témognage* movement had begun (Davey 2015; Gorin 2018, 2021). Still, these initiatives and organisations were predominantly ad hoc, with low levels of institutionalisation, reflecting the late stage of democratisation. Their proliferation nevertheless demonstrates a broad-based commitment seldom observed in a society profoundly affected by nearly five decades of widespread oppression. Their specificities bring complexity to the dynamics shaping the "humanitarian moment" and humanitarian governance (Fassin, 2012), a paradigm that was much more evident in East Timor after 1999 (Patrick, 2001; Wheeler and Dunne, 2001; Simpson 2016)

The Carnation Revolution connected local struggles with wider dynamics of protest against the violence and oppression of the authoritarian colonial regime. This process and its subsequent developments offer a distinctive perspective from which to analyse how humanitarian and human rights narratives and practices were intertwined within a context of significant transformational change. Conversely, analysing humanitarian and

human rights repertoires can enable a better understanding of the relational dynamics not only between the former metropole and its colonies, but also between the Portuguese State and civil society as they traversed critical junctures. The article argues that this humanitarian endeavour, specifically in the case of the East Timorese, was in various ways part of the democratisation process. Efforts to decolonise, democratise and develop – the 'Three Ds' — were conjugated into State- and civil society-led humanitarian and human rights advocacy initiatives, in both the emergency and the 'integration' phases. During the emergency phase, this civic engagement was spontaneous, and the humanitarian work relied on previously established organisations. From the 1980s onwards, the limits and shortcomings of State-led integration policies provided a platform for unprecedented humanitarian engagement, which interwove the plight of both the East Timorese who had fled to Lisbon and those who had remained in Dili. The East Timorese refugees played a crucial role in this process. In cooperation with Portuguese activists and political parties, they founded organisations, political movements, and campaigns and made their demands known to State officials and international entities. These dynamics entail elements of cooperation that defy hierarchical relations between providers and recipients of humanitarian aid (see also Granadino and Quaggio, 2026; Sciacchitano, 2026).

The article is based on research conducted in a range of State archives, local and international non-governmental organisations involved in the relief effort, and institutional archives of media and broadcasting organisations. It is divided into two sections. The first explores how the Portuguese democratic authorities dealt with the East Timorese quest for self-determination, the relief programme and the constraints on aid to this group in Portugal during the concomitant transition and emergency period. The second section examines how the situation of the East Timorese in Portugal and their pursuit of self-determination became interconnected themes in solidarity initiatives that integrated humanitarian efforts with human rights advocacy campaigns. The article further examines the participation of the East Timorese in the process of democratic consolidation in the host society – specifically through civic engagement and the formation of associations to advocate for their right to self-determination – as well as their achievement of fundamental rights enshrined in the new Portuguese Constitution.

Acknowledging the 'Most Distant Others': The East Timorese Cause and the Emergency Relief Programme in Portugal

Immediately after the Carnation Revolution, the Portuguese civilian and military authorities undertook the challenging task of reconciling the diverse imagined models to adopt in the democratisation of the country. Debates concerning the pursuit and realisation of political, social and economic rights increased in number and expanded to encompass ideas and visions related to granting independence to the Portuguese colonies (Keese, 2020; Rodrigues, 2010). The simultaneous processes of democratisation and decolonisation added to the complexity of the challenges encountered by all the decision-makers involved and by the millions affected by the legacies of authoritarian rule, also stemming from the abruptness and uncertainty associated with regime change (Jerónimo and Monteiro, 2023; Guardião, 2021).

In the case of East Timor, this uncertainty persisted for decades until the 1999 referendum, which led to independence in 2002. Immediately after the Carnation Revolution, reforms were implemented to enact civic rights and fulfil the East Timorese people's right to self-determination through a referendum. Three main parties emerged in May 1974. These were the Timorese Democratic Union (União Democrática Timorense, UDT), which favoured an association with Portugal, the Timorese Social-Democrat Association, which later became the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Frente Revolucionária do Timor-Leste Independente, FRETILIN) and the Timorese Popular Democratic Association (Associação Popular Democrática Timorense, APODETI), a supporter of integration in Indonesia.[v] The following year and a half was characterised by dissension and the inability of the Portuguese democratic regime to prevent and address the civil turmoil, which culminated in the Indonesian invasion on 7 December 1975. After enacting the right of colonised peoples to independence through Law 7/74 and affirming it at the United Nations in August 1974, the Portuguese government demonstrated ambivalence and unpreparedness in dealing with the situation in Timor. A new Governor, Lemos Pires, was appointed following a visit

by the Minister of Interterritorial Cohesion, Almeida Santos, who concluded that neither independence nor integration with Indonesia would be suitable outcomes (Santos, 2006: 293–4). In January 1975, FRETILIN and the UDT joined forces, but in August of the same year the alliance was ruptured by a coup staged by the UDT against the Portuguese administration, which triggered a civil war. In late 1975, the UDT split, with one faction siding with APODETI against FRETILIN, and cooperating with Indonesia.

The civil unrest and subsequent invasion led to a humanitarian crisis in the territory. Before relocating to the island of Atauro in late August 1975, the Portuguese authorities launched an appeal to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to help mediate the situation.[vi] Food shortages escalated the crisis, leading tens of thousands to flee. Many crossed the border to the Indonesian side, where the Indonesian Red Cross (IRC) acted in partnership with the ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS).[vii] Others fled to Australia or Portugal, where emergency relief was also provided thanks to the Red Cross Movement network.[viii]

The approximately one thousand five hundred East Timorese arriving in Lisbon from Dili consisted of Portuguese servicemen, civil servants and their families of European origin. Autochthonous groups were also present, some accompanying the Portuguese families, others affiliated with the three conflicting political movements, others still having fled to the Australian port city of Darwin to be transported by Portuguese rescue flights.[ix] This first influx would be followed by others in the subsequent years, with most East Timorese arriving between 1975 and 1979.

Upon arrival, they were met with conditions of a severe State crisis. The transition period was marked by political and economic instability. The new regime had six provisional governments from 1974 to 1976, followed by eight constitutional governments from 1976 to 1982, when the emergency phase was officially over. Furthermore, profound economic changes took place. The first years were also shaped by an economic restructuring, largely influenced by socialist thought and characterised by strong state intervention and the nationalisation of strategic sectors of the economy. This period of ‘rupture’ was largely consolidated by the 1976 Constitution (Lobo, Pinto and Magalhães 2016). Two bankruptcies followed, one in 1977 and another in 1983, which demanded interventions from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). According to the assessment sent by the

Portuguese Caritas to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in early 1976, there had been a collapse in production and investments, which reflected on the functioning of the monetary system and increased the deficit in the balance of payments. Of great concern was the substantial aggravation of unemployment, 'to which the significant massive afflux of the returned from the ex-colonies very much contributed'.[x] Indeed, as António Costa Pinto stated (2003), the decolonisation processes should not be dissociated from this metropolitan crisis, of which the many thousands of civilians arriving from the former colonies became the social face. This instability conditioned the emergence of and the response to the humanitarian crisis.

Aid to the East Timorese was encompassed within a multifaceted humanitarian response envisaged for a composite group of displaced people commonly labelled as *retornados* ('returnees'). This label, enshrined until November 1976 in Portuguese law, referred broadly to the Portuguese settlers and their descendants, most of whom arrived from Angola and Mozambique.[xi] Problematic and inaccurate, often with connotations of prejudice attached, the term *retornado* was rejected by many of them who regarded their situation as one of forced displacement and refuge (Kalter, 2022). Collective trauma aside, fitting into the artificial *retornado* category granted citizenship status. In contrast, the status of thousands of others arriving from the same geographical areas remained unclear at length, as the new nationality law (Decree-law 308-A/75) revoked the regime of imperial nationality that had been implemented under the Estado Novo.[xii] The 1951 revision of the Constitution had transformed the colonies into provinces of a 'cohesive nation separated by the sea', and the 1959 nationality law had granted Portuguese citizenship to all living in these areas. The legitimacy of the late colonial regime was promoted by the motto 'From Minho to Timor', referencing the two most distant points of the empire. Now that the empire had crumbled, the East Timorese, a people whose reality was unknown to the great majority of the Portuguese both before and after the Carnation Revolution, added to a hazy amalgam of migrants, refugees and citizens. Determining their status was a slow and challenging process, pressured by the UNHCR which had been called to assist the refugees among the displaced (Guardião and Jerónimo, 2021).[xiii] With East Timorese self-determination still pending after the Indonesian invasion, and the United Nations' declaration that the territory still came under Portuguese

administrative responsibilities, this group fell into a gap in the system.[xiv] They were neither Portuguese, nor economic migrants, nor refugees under international law.

Following the reasoning that East Timor was not a Portuguese colony and that a decision on its future was dependent on a referendum, the Portuguese State decided to equate the East Timorese with refugees. The decision was substantiated by article 2 in the 1980 Law 38/80 on refugee status and asylum which stipulated the granting of asylum for 'humanitarian reasons'.[xv] As no UNHCR programme directed aid to them in Portugal,[xvi] emergency assistance to the most destitute and those with increased barriers to integration – especially from language and illiteracy – fell under the care of the Portuguese Red Cross Society (PRC), the domestic organisation responsible for aiding refugees.[xvii]

The PRC was among the few humanitarian organisations operating in Portugal during the democratic transition. The Estado Novo's obstruction of freedom of association and concentration of humanitarian and welfare work in a couple of institutions with links to the State and the Catholic Church paved the way for the reliance on the same organisations during the regime transition and emergency phase.[xviii] Ad hoc State welfare entities created ex novo under the Ministry of Social Affairs were responsible for assisting the *retornados* and supplemented the aid provided to the East Timorese and other refugees. The leading institution was the Institute for the Support of the Return of Nationals (Instituto para o Apoio do Retorno de Nacionais, IARN), which supervised the aid operations during the transition phase. In a context of political and economic instability, humanitarian and State institutions operated under challenging conditions, resulting in low efficiency and tension between the two sectors.

The East Timorese in the PRC's care were congregated in collective reception centres. The largest was a camp set up during the summer of 1976 in the Jamor Valley, on the outskirts of Lisbon, to respond to the 'avalanches' of people arriving from the colonies.[xix] According to the agreement between the PRC and the IARN, the Jamor Valley reception centre was envisioned to provide shelter to one thousand of the 'most destitute' – those without family in Portugal and in need of accommodation and/or a food allowance; instead it ended up housing around two thousand people, amongst whom 420 East Timorese.[xx] The IARN provided the allowances whilst the PRC was responsible for running the camp, which was supposed to operate until mid-November of that year.[xxi] The aim

was then to move the families or individuals to prefabricated houses and permanent facilities at the expense of the IARN. Their status would be determined during this process. The PRC provided two hundred military tents for temporary shelter as well as the Quinta da Graça facility, where further accommodation, a canteen, a leisure centre, classrooms for schooling, daycare services and a dispensary were set up.[xxii]

Despite the good intentions, the situation in the camp proved to be chaotic and precarious, as the PRC lacked the means to respond to the demanding context. During the dictatorship, the PRC was very much dependent on the regime's directives and had not implemented either a cohesive structure throughout the country, or a vast network of members. It relied on the regime's male administrative and military elite and the voluntarism of their female family members. Hence, after the revolution, the organisation lacked the means and robustness to respond to the magnitude of the crisis, especially at a time of general political and economic instability and State reformulation. Nevertheless, the organisation never shied away from investing in its response to the situation, following the principles of the Red Cross. The case of the PRC reflected the broader underdevelopment of the sector, which began to expand during the transition, primarily with the emergence of grassroots movements and initiatives, before growing exponentially in the 1990s. As demonstrated later in the article, the East Timorese case was part of this path.

Individuals and families from East Timor arrived at the camp shortly after it was set up. Registers from September 1976 bear witness to the differentiation between *retornados* and 'refugees'.[xxiii] Nevertheless, the volume and frequency of arrivals and the movement of people between sites (both IARN-controlled and not) set the tone for a chaotic situation that undermined any rigorous knowledge of who was living in Jamor. Moreover, the emergency facilities were unsuited for the winter conditions. The alarm was first raised with the October rains, which made the structure built to accommodate people (roads and tents) inaccessible. The 1,600 people, including 800 children, became trapped in the precarious shelter. Health conditions were below acceptable minimum standards for the PRC. A report issued in late October called for the camp to be dismantled by 16 November. It stated, '[the PRC] cannot collaborate in a situation that will inevitably lead to outbreaks of disease, especially since it is such a painful challenge

for the populations welcomed there – children in particular – arriving in such a nutritional state and coming from such a climate, to adapt to the conditions of our winter in the tents where they are housed'.[xxiv]

The precarious situation lingered on until November of the following year, when all the refugees were moved to prefabricated houses after the PRC appealed to the LRCS.[xxv] In the meantime, some had remained in the tents, others had moved to new dwellings built by the IARN and others still had started living in shacks to substitute the tents. In January 1977, many of the East Timorese living in Jamor denounced their living conditions and the difficulties to integrate due to the lack of employment opportunities, expressing their desire to relocate to Australia. Family reunification, the proximity to Timor, a familiar climate and better opportunities were the reasons put forward.[xxvi]

The challenging socio-economic context of the transition to democracy and its aggravation by the humanitarian crisis were well known internationally, and international contributions were indispensable to respond to the crisis during the emergency phase. The various appeals of the Portuguese State and organisations such as the PRC to international institutions gathered momentum during the 1977 IMF bailout, which coincided with a second significant influx of people displaced by decolonisation. Partnerships with the UNHCR, the Red Cross Movement, the International Committee for European Migration (now the International Organisation for Migration) and the European Economic Community emerged or were consolidated. Contributions were commonly allocated in a general response to the bulk of the displaced, but in some cases, the East Timorese were specifically singled out for aid. For example, the Netherlands designated 100,000 of its 600,000-guilder donation to the emergency programme for Timorese refugees. It ensured assistance for one hundred people under family reunion stipulations, aided the integration of forty children 'without family support' in families or institutions, and granted scholarships to students and unemployed young people.[xxvii]

The humanitarian crisis had also become conspicuous in Portuguese homes, either because they were now accommodating distant family members or friends, or due to the information reported by the media outlets. In May 1977, the PRC launched an urgent appeal to Portuguese society on the radio and TV channels to provide assistance for the precarious situation in Jamor. At the time, the programme set up by the PRC could barely

function as the IARN proved incapable of fulfilling its responsibilities to provide the allowances. Donations in cash and kind continued to pour in despite the general economic uncertainty. They benefited the hundreds of East Timorese dependent on State allowances to survive, who were all gathered in Jamor in 1978.[xxviii] The Portuguese State's payment deficit remained constant until 1980, when the government dismantled the IARN and transferred responsibility for those in Jamor from the PRC to the Ministry of Social Affairs, marking the end of the emergency phase.[xxix] In the meantime, it fell to the Red Cross and other organisations to ensure the survival of the two thousand people living in Jamor.

As of 1975, distant East Timor entered the Portuguese imagination and lexicon. The civil unrest and, ultimately, the invasion by invasion brought to light a reality largely unknown to the majority. Furthermore, the failures of Portuguese colonialism and the shortcomings of decolonisation were increasingly apparent. Of the many arrivals, these 'most distant others' and their plight were acknowledged. The process was not spontaneous. It took the combined efforts of East Timorese and Portuguese activism, centred around achieving self-determination as part of building a democratic society in Portugal and creating the conditions for a similar future in East Timor. This will be the focus of the next section.

Advocating for East Timorese Rights: The Insufficiencies of 'Integration' and Self-Determination

For all the convulsions and uncertainty characterising it, the Portuguese transition to democracy was a period of unprecedented civil society engagement. Social movements, small and larger associations, and spontaneous gatherings proliferated in a country where people had felt gagged and watched in every corner of public life. Underground (and sometimes more explicit) action during the dictatorship – by academic associations fighting for political rights and against colonialism and the Catholic sector inspired by the Second Vatican Council reforms – now gave rise to everything from rural cooperatives (associated with the Communist-influenced people's appropriation of the land), to

movements linked to welfare, housing and gender rights.[xxx] The solidarity movement emerging from the spontaneous response to the humanitarian crisis of the 1967 floods, the worst disaster and humanitarian crisis since the 1755 earthquake, was an example of grassroots action that brought together students, the Catholic and health sectors, and underground activists to denounce the dictatorship's inaction before the revolution.[xxxi] Another act was the Rato Chapel vigil in Lisbon in 1972, which brought together both Christians and non-Christians to urge for decolonisation (Araújo, 2022; Almeida, 2016). During the democratic transition and consolidation processes, the East Timorese cause became another focus of domestic and transnational solidarity, centred on two entangled issues: granting refugees in Portugal dignified integration and the East Timorese people's fight for self-determination.

Immediately after Indonesia's invasion, several organisations and committees were founded to address the East Timorese situation, both in Portugal and the occupied territory. They came about from efforts by East Timorese refugees and Portuguese activists and politicians, many of whom were associated with the Catholic movement. These organisations and their initiatives can give us a better understanding of how humanitarian engagement was related to the democratisation process and the consolidation of an active civil society.

Two of these entities emerged in 1976. The first was the Commission of the Timorese Refugees (Comissão de Refugiados de Timor, CRT), which was organised by the refugees in the Jamor Valley camp.[xxxii] The CRT's primary aim was to advocate for the rights and interests of East Timorese refugees in Portugal, who faced greater integration barriers than other displaced groups, in particular in accessing the job market. It was through the CRT that refugees demanded the payment or return of the IARN allowances or denounced precarious housing conditions in Jamor. Besides addressing the specificities of the refugees' integration process, the CRT was active in extending asylum under the auspices of family reunification dispositions. Its representative, Father Francisco Fernandes,[xxxiii] campaigned for refugee mobility. His careful insistence with the UNHCR and the Portuguese government was crucial in ensuring the transportation of children and vulnerable groups to Portugal.[xxxiv]

The CRT also sought to connect refugees in Portugal to platforms to raise international awareness of the humanitarian crisis in East Timor and of their fight for self-determination. It was the CRT representative who welcomed and guided J. S. Dunn, Australian Member of Parliament (MP) and Director of the Foreign Affairs Group of the Legislative Research Service, to the various locations where East Timorese refugees were housed in early 1977 to interview them on their situation in Portugal and gather information about the context they had fled from.[xxxv] The report, which was shared with the Portuguese government, was instrumental in revealing civilian unrest and opposition during a period when Indonesia had already formally annexed the territory and international organisations, including the ICRC, were not authorised to enter.[xxxvi] Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the CRT and other East Timorese organisations such as the Commission for the Rights of the Maubere People, led transnational efforts to denounce the food insecurity crisis in East Timor, as well as multiple abuse by Indonesian authorities, including the perpetration of crimes against humanity.[xxxvii]

Another CRT initiative in this direction was the creation and activities of the Loro Sa'e artistic groups, which included a children's choir, a polyphonic choir, a dance and song group, the Tebedai-Bidu and Tebe traditional dance group, the Loro Sá warrior dance group and the 'Doli' choir. Organised to promote leisure activities and connect the community with their original homeland, these groups soon started to participate in events to raise awareness of the East Timorese question and funds for the refugees in Portugal. A major initiative for these two ends was the partnership formed between the CTR, the PRC and the Gulbenkian Foundation in 1978 to produce hundreds of Loro Sa'e records and promote the groups' performances.[xxxviii] Records were sold, for example, through the Red Cross network in France, Switzerland and Morocco, and the groups were invited to perform at the Festival International des Pyrénées in France.[xxxix] The initiative also served as a platform for the Swiss and Portuguese Red Cross societies to begin talks to partner and sponsor summer camps for refugee children on Portuguese beaches and campsites over the following three years. The children's choir was also the star performer during the official visit of Grace Kelly, then Princess of Monaco, to Portugal in early 1979. During her stay, the Princess visited the refugees in Jamor and the Linhó neighbourhood.[xl] Televised on the Portuguese Radio and Television (Rádio Televisão Portuguesa, RTP)

State broadcasting channel, her visit called for the engagement of Portuguese society on the issues of self-determination and social rights,[xli] associating the refugees' causes with the broader socio-economic challenges in Portuguese society. Identified as the primary obstacle to complete integration and forming one of the most significant social challenges faced by successive Portuguese governments, permanent and adequate housing was enshrined as a right in the new Portuguese Constitution.[xlii]

The second entity created in 1976 was GATIMOR, a committee established within the Christian Democrat party by one of its MPs, Miguel Anacoreta Correia, to monitor the situation in Timor and lobby to place the issue on the national and international agendas.[xliii] GATIMOR served as a platform for subsequent actions which culminated in the activities promoted by the Action Centre for Cooperation and Development (Centro de Ações para a Cooperação e Desenvolvimento, 1984). The first public activity was the seminar 'Timor: 10 anos depois' (Timor: 10 years later) which 'raised awareness of the idea that something should be done to unblock the Timor question, or, at least, to publicise it'.[xliv] One task completed in this sense was the establishment of a support network among Catholics in Portugal, Macau, Malacca and Dili. It successfully allowed Anacoreta Correia, in 1986, to embark on the first mission of a Portuguese politician to the occupied territory after the invasion and severance of relations between Portugal and Indonesia.

The Portuguese authorities had made several attempts to negotiate access to the territory through the United Nations. However, by 1984, not only had this not met with success, but the question of East Timor had lost supporters at the General Assembly, as by then the Indonesian annexation was regarded by many States as a fait accompli. Cold War interests, particularly aligned with the growing importance of Southeast Asia and Indonesia within it for the United States, weakened international commitment to East Timorese self-determination and a thorough scrutiny of Suharto's regime abuse (Simpson, 2005). For the first time, the resolution presented by Portugal condemning the invasion risked not being approved. The Christian networks were thus essential to circumvent the political barriers.

Anacoreta Correia's mission reported on a good level of investment in the island, but also outlined some aspects of concern. It was evident that East Timor was one of the foci of a

transmigration plan, which could erode the specific characteristics of its people's identity within a few generations. Educational policies also pursued this same aim. Many did not speak freely, and although the MP had access to all the areas he desired to go to, it was evident that he was navigating a controlled environment. Another known problem was the confinement of thousands of civilians allegedly associated with the resistance in Atauro.[xlv] These aspects became relevant in Portuguese foreign policy in the following years. In this sense, the good image Anacoreta Correia had left among the Indonesian authorities, especially those of Christian faith, opened up the dialogue and the possibility of allowing other Portuguese and international representatives access to the area as well as closer cooperation in refugee family reunion through the Red Cross.[xlvi]

Despite these developments, the Social Democrat government led by Aníbal Cavaco Silva closer alignment with the Reagen Administration in the second half of the 1980s led, for the first time, to ambiguous formulations on East Timor, which failed to reference to self-determination.[xlvii] Conversely, multiple campaigns emerged in the Portuguese civil society transcending political affiliations, social strata and beliefs. The interconnection of the refugees' plight and the right of the East Timorese to self-determination gained increasing visibility in the demands of members of the Portuguese Parliament and in solidarity campaigns. One such demand was that of António Lopes Cardoso, MP of the Left-Wing Union for the Socialist Democracy (União da Esquerda para a Democracia Socialista), in Parliament. The document began by requesting clarification of the government's policy regarding the East Timor question. It ended by pressuring for a swift and structural response to 'end or at least ease the inhuman situation in which [the Timorese refugees] are forced to live, and whose tragic situation' in the Jamor Valley had worsened since the previous floods.[xlviii] The refugees were, by then, accommodated in the prefabricated dwellings provided by the IARN and the Red Cross, in insalubrious conditions, similar to those of a shantytown (Guardião and Jerónimo, 2021). Other MPs, such as Manuel Tilman of Independent Social Democratic Action (Acção Social Democrata Independente) and a Timorese descendant, also supported building transnational solidarity networks whilst demanding social justice for the East Timorese in Portugal.

These actions, along with the spirit of international solidarity surrounding Live Aid (1985) and the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (1987), gave rise to an unprecedented campaign in Portugal to address the refugees' situation. It mimicked international humanitarian engagement strategies, such as investing in live shows starring pop culture celebrities to raise awareness and speak out about the inhumane conditions the East Timorese endured.[xlix] '87Timor Vamos Ajudar!' (87Timor Let's Help!) was a televised campaign uniting NGOs, trade unions, public figures and artistic performances to raise funds to build 162 permanent homes for the refugees, find jobs for the unemployed and secure education for the children. Complementing the welfare role of the State, its explicit aim was to guarantee the integration of the 162 families who were 'part of our own family' within Portuguese society to "contribute to making their horizon one of development and liberation". [l] The families were relocated to permanent houses in the Oeiras municipality by 1993, when the housing facilities in the Jamor Valley were finally dismantled.[li]

The solution for the plight of those who had arrived in the mid-1970s came at a time when the East Timorese question had regained momentum on the international agenda. On 12 November 1991, the Indonesian military killed more than three hundred unarmed protesters in Dili, who "expressed their desire for a free and independent East Timor". [lii] The event became known as the Santa Cruz Cemetery massacre as thousands of protesters marched to the mourning sight to pay homage to Sebastião Gomes Rangel, a Timorese youth, member of the Student National Resistance of Timor Leste (Resistência Nacional dos Estudantes de Timor-Leste, RENETIL), executed by Indonesian security forces on 28 October at the Moatel Church, a refuge place for the Catholic resistance. Footage of the massacre substantiated international condemnation of the event and of the Indonesian occupation in a path that culminated in the 1999 referendum.

In Portugal, the massacre led to a general increase in civil society's involvement in the fight for self-determination. The engagement combined the proliferation and increasing action of humanitarian and civic organisations and initiatives with the galvanisation of all sectors of society by the Presidency of the Republic. A few days after the massacre, President Mário Soares called for a national reflection day. Hundreds of thousands of messages poured into the Presidency. Some, as the ones from the students of the Linda-

a-Velha Highschool in Oeiras, showed the relation created with the East Timorese cause: 'I think about the horror of those images and cannot understand. How can I realise that I am growing up in a world in which one is assassinated for loving one's fatherland! There are many Timorese in my school who were refugees in Jamor. How can I look at them, from now on, without feeling guilt, if I live peacefully with the horror of the images I saw and do nothing about it? This is why, Mr President, I am writing you this letter. To tell you that my most profound wish is to be proud to live in a country that stands against interests that I do not even understand for the right to independence, freedom and life.'[liii]

In schools, universities, parishes, trade unions, small companies, big factories and local cultural or sports clubs, people of all ages engaged in campaigns associated with 12 November every year. Remembering the massacre became synonymous with human rights advocacy at rallies and vigils, and with fundraising campaigns to aid East Timor.[liv] One prominent example was the organisation of the East Timor Peace Mission by students of the University of Coimbra's magazine, *Forum Estudante,* on board the vessel 'Lusitânia Expresso'. The mission united 120 students and journalists from 23 countries in a peaceful protest to lay flowers on the graves of those who had been massacred in Santa Cruz. Intercepted by the Indonesian navy on 11 March 1992, the activists threw the flowers into the sea, 'which would lead them to the Sea of Timor.' According to the leader of the initiative, Rui Marques, the purpose of the mission, to put East Timor on the international agenda, was achieved.[lv]

The work of organisations and political parties associated with the East Timorese cause continued throughout the decade. Among other initiatives, the CRT, GATIMOR and the Commission for the Rights of the Maubere People associated with the Amilcar Cabral Centre for Information and Documentation raised funds to assist political prisoners and prisoners of war, especially after the detention of the FRETILIN leader Xanana Gusmão.[lvi] These organisations were also fundamental in pressuring the Portuguese government to grant asylum and award scholarships to East Timorese students.[lvii] In the following years, RENETIL students continued to be arrested in protests associated with the massacre. Many secured passage to Portugal, where these organisations continued to aid their integration. Educating and training the future cadres for an independent and democratic East Timor was essential to their work.[lviii]

As the decade passed, the campaigns and gatherings became more frequent, in condemnation of Indonesia's actions and the United Nations' passivity. Up to the enactment of the 1999 referendum, the Portuguese solidarity movement grew, associating the values and aims of the Carnation Revolution with the self-determination of the East Timorese people. Spontaneous engagement culminated after a second Indonesian attempt to dominate the territory by force, after the East Timorese voted for independence on 31 August. A few days later, in Lisbon, a human cordon of more than 300,000 people linked the UN headquarters to the North American, Chinese, British, Russian, and French embassies in protest against the Security Council's inaction. It was the greatest gathering of Portuguese civilians since the first free elections on April 25, 1975.[lix]

Conclusion

As this article has demonstrated, humanitarian initiatives provide a relevant lens for a better understanding of the interconnected processes of Portuguese democratisation and decolonisation. Approaching the humanitarian crisis in Portugal following the Carnation Revolution and the end of the empire with a specific focus on the East Timorese refugees also enables a critical analysis to be made of the State and civil society actions during the democratic transition and consolidation.

The humanitarian endeavour in Portugal took up the aims of the revolution as set out in the 'Three Ds': Democratisation, Decolonisation and Development. These efforts were conjugated into State- and civil society-led humanitarian and human rights advocacy initiatives, both in the emergency and the refugee 'integration' phases. The political and economic instability that followed the Carnation Revolution hampered a robust State response to the humanitarian crisis. Portugal had to rely on international loans and donations to cope with the abrupt ruptures brought about by the regime change and decolonisation. It also entrusted established humanitarian organisations with the management of the emergency phase. The PRC was the organisation responsible for dealing with and taking care of the East Timorese, who were granted refugee status in

domestic law. Guaranteeing the basic welfare rights enshrined in the 1976 Constitution was a challenging endeavour for the State authorities. In the case of the East Timorese refugees, the achievement of social rights was only possible thanks to the engagement of the Portuguese civil society. Appeals by the PRC and solidarity campaigns such as '87Timor Vamos Ajudar' ensured the refugees' integration.

Despite a low level of formal organisation, civic engagement was effective. The few early organisations associated with the East Timorese cause contained Portuguese as well as East Timorese activists. The CRT was a prime example of how, in a fervent democratic society, refugeedom (Gatrell *et al.*, 2021) became integral to civic participation. From an early stage, the organisation managed to link the refugees' plight to that of the East Timorese people on the opposite side of the world. The people whose reality had been unknown for centuries were now close and their voice loud.

As in other democratisation processes in Southern Europe (Sciacchitano 2026; Granadino and Quaggio, 2026) political parties were also instrumental to humanitarian and advocacy initiatives. In the Portuguese case, the first initiatives stemmed form the Christian Democrats but soon spread across the political spectrum. Christianity was thus a common link between the activists and a powerful means to reach East Timor. Anacoreta Correia's initiatives and mission were fundamental to that aim. In the same way, at the head of the CRT, Father Francisco Fernandes facilitated the transportation of refugees from East Timor to Portugal in fulfilment of family reunification rights.

Finally, the connection between the rights of refugees in Portugal and the right of the East Timorese people to self-determination provided an effective platform to boost the increasing and, ultimately, unprecedented engagement of Portuguese civil society in human rights advocacy and humanitarian campaigns. Intertwined in actions against the East Timorese plight, effective decolonisation, humanitarian practices and human rights activism had become a fundamental part of the process of Portuguese democratic consolidation. In many instances, initiatives in Portugal, such as the broadcasting of Grace Kelly's visit, the '87Timor Vamos Ajudar!' campaign and the campaigns following the Satna Cruz Massacre, or the 'Lusitânia Expresso' mission, reflected broader humanitarian dynamics and engagement strategies (Davey, 2015; Gorin, 2018; Kuhnert, 2018). They are essential for a better understanding of civic participation and for the

historicization of the development of the NGO sector in Portugal, its transnational ramifications and the ways in which it is shaped by the colonial past – topics still understudied.

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[i] Noticing increasing efforts to integrate Southern European democratic transitions in the global dynamics of decolonisation and the Cold War, Papadogiannis and Ramos Pinto (2023) emphasise the relevance of the colonial dimension in the Portuguese case too.

[ii] The exact numbers of the influx are unknown, the usual reference being the study by Rui Pena Pires (1987) based on the answers to the 1981 census. The study measured the number of people living in the colonies as of December 1973, with the positive answers amounting to approximately half a million. However, Pires estimates a higher number, as those who died, left or were born after that date were not counted. In addition, those who did not answer the demographic study also need to be considered. Due to these discrepancies, most scholars cite an average of between seven and eight hundred thousand people.

[iii] On Southern European actors' engagement in humanitarian initiatives in relation to decolonisation and postcolonial crises, see the contributions in the Special Issue *Humanitarianism in the Age of Decolonization: A View from Southern Europe* (Salvatici, 2024).

[iv] This is not to say that the decolonisation of the former Portuguese African colonies was a quick process. From the 1950s on, rebellions took place against the colonial regime in all the colonies and were more or less success fully repressed. In Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, these processes transformed into violent decolonisation wars beginning in 1961, 1963 and 1964, respectively. Thus, the 'swiftness' of the decolonisation here refers only to the length of time between the Carnation Revolution and the independence of Portugal's African colonies.

[v] The UDT's position was ambivalent in different periods. Its leaders were divided between those advocating integration with Indonesia, those in favour of independence and those supporting an association with Portugal. A telling symbol of this diversity was the Carrascalão brothers. Both founding members of the UDT, Mário Carrascalão became Governor of the Timorese territory during part of the Indonesian occupation (1983–92) but denounced the perpetration of abuse by the Indonesian forces. In contrast, João

Carrascalão took refuge in Australia and Portugal and joined forces with FRETILIN under the umbrella of the National Council of Timorese Resistance (Conselho Nacional da Resistência Timorense, CNRT).

[vi] International Federation of the Red Cross Archives (henceforth IFRCA), Reuters, 'La guerre civile est prête à éclater à Timor où la population locale semble déjà touchée', *Journal de Genève* (22 August 1975), AO 065/2, ROP 7516, Timor: Troubles [1975].

[vii] More than thirty thousand East Timorese crossed the border according to the Indonesian Red Cross. IFRCA, IRC to LRCS, 18 September 1975, AO 065/2, ROP 7516, Timor: Troubles [1975].

[viii] IFRCA, Australian Red Cross to League of Red Cross Societies, 19 September 1975, AO 065/2, ROP 7516, Timor: Troubles [1975]. Portugal sent a humanitarian plane to provide supplies and transport civilians. Arquivo do Instituto Camões (Camões Institute Archive, henceforth AIC), Presidency of the Republic to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 August 1975, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs to all diplomatic missions, 14 August 1975, 08.08/01.

[ix] Although the refugees were associated with different movements, the majority were supporters of the UDT. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Archives (henceforth UNHCRA), Otto W. Gobius, to Headquarters, 15 August 1975, doc. 1, Refugees from Portuguese Timor General 100, 1975–79.

[x] UNHCRA, Caritas, *Report Angolan Returnees – Assistance Program in View of the Emergency Situation*, January 1976, doc. 3, NGOS, 410 Caritas Portugal 1975–84.

[xi] Arquivo da Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa (Portuguese Red Cross Society Archives, henceforth ACVP), Ordem de Operações 1/77, January 1977, CAR Peniche.

[xii] This is not to say that citizenship rights were guaranteed to all those under the Portuguese national flag, far from it. A hierarchy based on racialisation and civilisational ethos continued to be practiced throughout the empire, with the 'indigenous' having a specific status and enduring multiple abuses. Decree-Law 308-A/75 changed the nationality parameters from a basis of jus soli to jus sanguinis with a strong ethnic bias (Kalter, 2022; Guardião and Jerónimo, 2021). Despite being part and parcel of the break from the imperial and authoritarian past and forging good relations with the newly independent States, the law created a nebulous situation for many, who came to understand only after their arrival that neither they nor their descendants were protected by Portuguese citizenship.

[xiii] On deliberations regarding refugee status and UNHCR pressure on the Portuguese government to adopt a satisfactory refugee and asylum law, see UNHCRA, Programming Portugal v. 1; Refugees Portugal General, vol. 1.

[xiv] United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3485 (XXX), adopted on 12 December 1975. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/189768?v=pdf.

[xv] Diário da República, Law 38/80 of 1 August 1980. https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/lei/38-470246.

[xvi] The UNHCR assisted the East Timorese who fled directly to other States, or left Portugal to go to other States. An example of the latter was the aid provided to the East Timorese who went to Mozambique under an agreement between the Portuguese and Mozambican States. According to the agency, the East Timorese outside East Timor and Portugal were eligible for refugee status as enshrined in the 1967 New York Protocol. UNHCRA, Leonardo Franco, *Reinstallation de Timorens de l'Est en Australie*, 19 July 1980, doc. 28, Refugees from Portuguese Timor in Portugal, v.2.

[xvii] As mentioned before, the UNHCR provided aid to those under its mandate. Its programmes were developed in cooperation with the Portuguese State, the PRC and Caritas Portugal.

[xviii] International humanitarian endeavours were concentrated under the PRC and Caritas Portugal, the leading aid organisations in the domestic crisis. Parishes, *misericórdias* (literally, houses of mercy) and *casas do povo* (houses of the people) went to complete the network of aid in the country and the colonies. The chief exception was the Gulbenkian Foundation, which had a multi-layered programme that incorporated both international and national humanitarian campaigns.

[xix] ACVP, José Lourenço Fernandes to CAC Jamor Director, 19 October 1979, Processo 82, CAC Jamor II (1979).

[xx] Of whom 382 arrived in 1976, twenty-five in 1977 and sixteen in 1978. To this number ninety-three people need to be added as a result of the policy to gather all the Timorese in 1978. Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (Portuguese Historical Overseas Archives, henceforth AHU), Relatório Geral da População Residente nos Centros de Alojamento da Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa, IARN, folder 11. ACVP, IARN Director to PRC President, Memorandum 53/DIR/79, January 1979, and IARN Director to PRC President, Memorandum 181/DIR/79, 5 February 1979, Processo 82, CAC Jamor II (1979); Lieutenant-colonel António Paranhos Teixeira, Information 89/78, 7 August 1978, Processo 3, IARN, 1978.

[xxi] AHU, Cooperation Agreement between the PRC and the IARN, July 1976, IARN, folder 332 – Correspondência CVP.

[xxii] ACVP, CAC Jamor Activity Report – year 1977, 10 April 1978, File Independência das Províncias Ultramarinas – Alojamento de Retornados, CAC Jamor 1976–79.
[xxiii] ACVP, Retornados – Centro de Alojamento Colectivo, Declarações de Alojamento – 1977–79.
[xxiv] AHU, Lieutenant-colonel António Paranhos Teixeira, Informação 57/76, 20 October 1976, IARN, file 555.
[xxv] The LRCS guaranteed 105 prefabricated houses provided by donations from the Swiss, Swedish and Danish Red Cross Societies. ACCVP, folder IARN/Deslocados.
[xxvi] Casa Comum – Arquivos da Fundação Mário Soares and Maria Barroso (Archives of the Mario Soares and Maria Barroso Foundation, henceforth Casa Comum), J. S. Dunn, The East Timor Situation – Report on the Talks with Timorese Refugees in Portugal, 11 February 1977, Arquivo da Resistência Timorense – TAPOL (Archive of the Timorese Resistance, henceforth TAPOL), folder 06451.001.
[xxvii] AHU, Preliminary Programme of Emergency Aid to the Dislodged – Donation of the Dutch Government (six hundred thousand guilders), 13 March 1978, IARN, folder 418 – Organismos Internacionais.
[xxviii] A few East Timorese families (no accurate data was found) had been lodged in other facilities under PRC care, such as the Peniche Fort, a former prison for political detainees under the Estado Novo regime. In 1978, all East Timorese were gathered in Jamor. AHU, Ministry of Defence, Memorandum 01828, IARN, folder 332 – CVP. On the refugees in Peniche, see ACVP, folders Centro de Acolhimento de Peniche and Centro de Acolhimento de Peniche 1977-1978; for a brief appreciation of the situation see the work of Ana Guardião and Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo (2021).
[xxix] The IARN was completely dismantled in May of the following year. See Diário da República, Decree-law 97/81, 2 May 1981, https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/decreto-lei/97-573358.
[xxx] For a summary of the state of the art of social movements and activism in Portugal, Spain and Greece during the democratic transitions, see the work of Nikolaos Papadogiannis and Pedro Ramos Pinto (2023).
[xxxi] The solidarity response to the floods is still understudied. However, recent evocations of the episode show the fundamental involvement of these sectors in raising national and international awareness of the humanitarian crisis and denouncing the Estado Novo's insufficiencies and cover-up operation. See, for example, the case of the *Solidariedade Estudantil* bulletin organised by students of the Instituto Superior Técnico and the University Catholic Youth (Juventude Universitária Católica – JUC). On the activism of progressive Catholics in Portugal, see the work of João Miguel Almeida (2016) and Maria Thomas (2017).
[xxxii] AHU, IARN, folder 111 – Comissão de Refugiados de Timor.
[xxxiii] Father Francisco Fernandes was born in Lacló, into a local family. After being ordained he taught at the Soibada college, where he had taken his seminary studies. During the civil unrest and later invasion, Father Fernandes led a group of thousands of refugees who had fled to Atambua in the Indonesian side of Timor. From here for nine months he mobilised efforts to assist the refugees and relocate them to Portugal. In Lisbon, he directed the CRT and, in 1981, he left with a group of refugees to go to Perth, Australia, where he continued his solidarity campaigns and activism to raise awareness of the East Timorese plight (Sousa, 2006: 34–5).
[xxxiv] UNHCRA, Fr. Francisco Fernandes to United Nations High Commissioner, 26 May 1977, Refugees from Portuguese Timor General 100, 1975–79.
[xxxv] Dunn did not represent the Australian government. His expenses were supported by Australian non-governmental organisations. During his mission, Dunn interviewed more than two hundred refugees. Casa Comum, J. S. Dunn, The East Timor Situation – Report on the Talks with Timorese Refugees in Portugal, 11 February 1977, TAPOL, folder 06451.001.
[xxxvi] The Indonesian Parliament formally approved the annexation of East Timor on 7 July 1976. Australia formally recognised the annexation in January 1978.
[xxxvii] Founded in the late 1970s by the Amilcar Cabral Centre for Information and Docuemntation, the Commission was a prominent organisation in denouncing the situation in East Timor. Other organisations devoted to these endeavours included the Timor Refugee Coalition and the National Movement for the Liberation and Independence of Timor-Dili. On the building of the transnational movement and the denunciations, see (Guardião, 2027).
[xxxviii] ACVP, M. A. Fernandes de Oliveira to PRC President, 28 January 1978, and Álvaro Lopes to PRC President, 2 February 1978, process 12 – Calouste Gulbenkian, 1978.
[xxxix] ACVP, *Report of the Roundtable on Population Mobility, Cartigny, Switzerland, 12–18 March 1978*, Lieutenant-colonel António Paranhos Teixeira, Information 72/77, 12 July 1977, Lee Peterson to PRC Secretary-General, 14 September 1977, all in Processo 108 – Mesa Redonda sobre Refugiados (1978); Apolinário Aparício Guterres to Colonel Saraiva, 21 June 1980, folder IARN / Deslocados.
[xl] The Linhó neighbourhood was a PRC initiative to build permanent housing for refugees from former Portuguese colonies. The Gulbenkian Foundation and international organisations contributed to this effort.

[xli] Arquivo da Rádio Televisão Portuguesa (Portuguese Radio and Television Archives, henceforth ARTP), Grace Kelly's visit to Refugees, 24 January 1979. https://arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/grace-kelly-visita-refugiados.
[xlii] AHU, Minister of Social Affairs to Secretary of State for Housing, 26 September 1980, IARN, folder 111. Article 65 of the 1976 Constitution states that "Everyone has the right, for themselves and their family, to adequate housing, in hygienic and comfortable conditions, and which preserves personal intimacy and family privacy" and it is the State's duty to ensure the right to housing. Constituição de Da República Portuguesa, in https://www.parlamento.pt/Legislacao/paginas/constituicaorepublicaportuguesa.aspx, accessed 7 April, 2026.
[xliii] The establishment of humanitarian agendas by political parties during the transition to democracy and as part of the consolidation of the democratic regime was also prevalent in the Spanish case, namely through the action of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español. For these developments see Alan Granadino and Giulia Quaggio (2026) and Grazia Sciacchitano (2026).
[xliv] Arquivo Histórico da Presidência da República (Historical Archive of the Presidency of the Republic, henceforth AHPR), Miguel Anacoreta Correia, 'Viagem a Timor Leste – Julho de 1986' report presented to the ad hoc Committee for Monitoring the Situation in East Timor, July 1986, Casa Civil – Assessoria de Relações Internacionais, Timor – Diversos (1986–95).
[xlv] *Ibid*. On the specificities of the mission and the humanitarian crisis in the territory, see Ana Guardião (2027).
[xlvi] ACVP, Gabinete Secretário Geral – Processos, Coronel Alves Cardoso, Directiva Operacional, s.d.
[xlvii] AHPR, PT/PR/AHPR/CC/CC0210/2478, 'A Missão Parlamentar a Timor-Leste', 8 March, 1988.
[xlviii] Casa Comum, António Lopes Cardoso, Request to the Portuguese Government, 31 January 1984, TAPOL, folder 06456.019.
[xlix] On these strategies and the *témognage* movement see, for example, the works of Mathias Kuhnert (2018) and Valérie Godin (2018).
[l] UNHCRA, Dom Duarte de Bragança to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 30 April 1987, Protection and General Legal Matters – Special Protection Problems Family Reunion Refugees from Indonesia (East Timor) in Portugal. ARTP, Launching of the 'Timor 87' Campaign, 1 January 1987,https://arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/passagem-de-ano-com-campanha-timor-1987; and 'Campaign Timor 87 Vamos Ajudar!', 12 February 1987, https://arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/campanha-timor-87-vamos-ajudar. Among the NGOs were the Amade Portugal, the PRCS, the League of Human Rights, the Institute for Child Support, the National Confederation of Family Associations, the Gulbenkian Foundation, Portuguese misericórdias, the UNHCR branch in Portugal. The Agricultural Workers Association, and the Industrial and Commerce confederations were involved. So were the two prominent trade union federations – the General Workers Union and the General Confederation of the Portuguese Workers – following a path of solidary in the Southern European region (Salvatici, 2026).

[li] The building project began in 1988. 'Timorenses do Jamor receberam casas no bairro de Laveiras' s.n., s.d. AHPR, Casa Civil – Assessoria de Relações Internacionais, Timor – ONGs, 1984-1994 (1), CRT – Comunidade dos Refugiados de Timor.
[lii] According to one of the few foreign witnesses of the massacre, the majority of protestors were young. Indonesian soldiers carried automatic fire for more than 30 minutes. Peter Boyle, 'East Timor: Eyewitness to Massacre" *The Green Left*, 20 November 1991. TAPOL – ACFOA Human Rights Office – East Timorese Files, Actions / Campaigns, Santa Cruz massacre, Eyewitness Accounts.
[liii] In many cases, individual letters were written, in others content of letters was discussed in class and copies of the same document sent to the Presidency. In the case of the Linda-a-Velha School, 1800 letters were sent. Student to President of the Republic, 18 Novemeber,1991. AHPR, Casa Civil – Assessoria de Relações Internacionais, Timor – Massacre de Santa Cruz, Mensagens 91, 1991-1992 (1).
[liv] ARTP, Campanha por Timor Leste, 27 November, 1991, https://arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/campanha-por-timor-leste/ Arquivo do Centro de Intervenção para o Desenvolvimento Amilcar Cabral (Archives of the Almilcar Cabral Centre for Information and Development, henceforth CIDAC,) *Campanha de Angariação de Fundos Por Timor*, s.d., TL 2017, https://xdata.bookmarc.pt/cidac/tl/TL2017.pdf.
[lv] 'Lusitânia Expresso. A Aventura mais longínqua da FORUM', *Forum Estudante* 30 September, 2022, https://www.forum.pt/reportagem/lusitania-expresso-a-aventura-mais-longinqua-da-forum-faz-30-anos. For details on the mission, see AHPR, AHPR, Casa Civil – Assessoria de Relações Internacionais, 'Lusitânia Exp'esso' Missão de Paz em Timor 1992, folders 1 and 2.

[lvi] One example was the 'Solidarity campaign with political prisoners – Postcards with answers' in which people bought postcards to send the to the detainees. Among the 7000 postcards sent, 400 were received by Xanana Gusmão. CIDAC, 'Campanha de solidariedade com os presos timorenses – Postais com Resposta', *Informação Timor-Leste*, 95, December 1993, http://xdata.bookmarc.pt/cidac/tl/PerS20-095.pdf.

[lvii] AHPR, Casa Civil – Assessoria de Relações Internacionais, Timor – Massacre de Santa Cruz, Acontecimentos em Jacarta de 12 Novembro, 1994; Casa Civil – Assessoria de Relações Internacionais, Timor – ONGs, 1984-1994 (1).

[lviii] AHPR, Casa Civil – Assessoria de Relações Internacionais, Timor – ONGs, 1984-1994, folders 1 to 4.

[lix] Ricardo Dias Felner "Arrepio de mãos dadas em Lisboa", 9 September, 1999, *Jornal Público*, https://www.publico.pt/1999/09/09/jornal/arrepio-de-maos-dadas-em-lisboa-123340 [last accessed April 2026].