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Press Release

The Ban on Martial Arts Groups and its Application to F-FDTL and PNTL Personnel

Government Resolution N.º 16/2013 banned all activities of three Martial Arts Groups (MAGs)—PSHT, Kera Sakti, and KORK—in Timor-Leste. But even after the resolution these groups continued their activities, which sometimes involved members of the FALINTIL-Defence Force of Timor-Leste (F-FDTL) and the National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL). Finally, the activities of the banned MAGs were criminalized by Law N.º 5/2017 from April 19, “the Juridical Regime Related to the Practice of Martial Arts, Ritual Arts, Melee Weapons, *Rama Ambon*, and the Fifth Alteration to the Penal Code.”

On December 11th, 2017 the F-FDTL subjected one of its members from the Service Support Component (CAS) to disciplinary proceedings due to his involvement in the Martial Arts group PSHT. These proceedings culminated in the soldier’s dismissal from the institution on the basis of violations of regulations and laws.

Government Resolution N.º 16/2013 “the Extinction of Martial Arts Groups” announced a total ban on all activity by the MAGs PSHT, KERA SAKTI and KORK. This ban inaugurated a “zero tolerance” policy for PNTL and F-FDTL members involved in MAG activities. Therefore, when security personnel are involved, they will suffer disciplinary sanctions, including dismissal according to the terms of the relevant disciplinary statute.

Similarly, Law N.º 5/2017 criminalized the activities of the banned MAGs as well as the practice of rituals in martial arts contests. When practiced by F-FDTL personnel, members of the security forces, judges, justice officials, state functionaries, or employees of public agencies responsible for the prevention and repression of the illegal activities mentioned by the law, these crimes can be punished by 6 to 10 years in prison.

However, no information has been made public about the ongoing process against the recently dismissed F-FDTL member. Because Law N.º 5/2017 criminalizes the practice and exercise of the illegal martial arts, this individual should be subject to criminal prosecution in addition to disciplinary sanctions from the F-FDTL.

Recommendations

1. FM recommends that the F-FDTL and PNTL continue strengthening their members' discipline in order to completely fulfil their institutional missions, the law, and the Constitution.
2. FM recommends that F-FDTL and PNTL personnel ensure the full implementation of regulations and laws that prohibit involvement in MAGs.

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