



## **An Oath for Members of the F-FDTL and PNTL: End Ties with Martial Art Groups**

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## Introduction

Reports from state authorities and the civil society organizations in the last two years have frequently discussed the confrontations caused by martial art groups (MAGs). The groups referenced in this report are among the problematic groups mentioned by a government resolution in 2013, which called for the immediate and total halt of MAG activities. These groups are *Persaudaraan Setia Hati Terate* (PSHT), *Kmanek Oan Rai Klaran* (KORK), and *Ikatan Kera Sakti* (IKS).

Have these groups disbanded, or are they actually still operating within their communities, causing confrontations and general instability? This question has become a popular discussion within communities around Timor-Leste and has been asked in headline debates by every national media source. At the end of 2014, a conflict took place in Baucau. This conflict involved youths from different suburbs, villages, and sub-municipalities, and this conflict has been traced to MAGs. This conflict resulted in 3 deaths as well as many burned homes and slaughtered animals.<sup>1</sup>

Members of National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL) and the FALINTIL-Defense Force of Timor-Leste (F-FDTL) have been accused of involvement in this incident. However, Fundasaun Mahein follow-up monitoring efforts showed that these allegations had not received serious attention from security authorities. According to people present at the site of the conflict, some security personnel strongly intervened and even contributed to one side of the MAG conflict.

Recently, however, the involvement of security personnel has received strong attention from the Ministry of Defense and Security. On January 13<sup>th</sup>, an oath ceremony took place at the government palace. During this ceremony, members of the PNTL and F-FDTL suspected of taking part in MAG groups were compelled to swear an oath of loyalty to the government. Meanwhile, some MAG-affiliated members of the PNTL remain unknown and involved in MAG conflict.

## Methodology

In preparation of this report, FM staff gathered information and literature published by national NGOs, international NGOs, and national media sources. Also compiled were official state documents, past FM reports from 2014, and important findings from Security Sector Discussions (SSD) held at Fundasaun Mahein.

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<sup>1</sup> FM's monitoring of the conflicts that occurred in Baucau and Dili at the end of 2014 and New Year's Day 2015.



## Martial Arts Group Conflict

The conflict between MAGs during the Indonesian occupation occurred infrequently but was notorious in the public eye in this period. Since independence in 2002, MAGs have sometimes been manipulated by the military into instigating conflict.

MAGs played an important role in securing the independence of Timor-Leste, comprising a three-pronged clandestine front that battled Indonesia Occupation. In this period, MAGs became important networks through which youth shared information and support for the national cause. Since independence, however, MAGs have continued organizing, and these groups have been involved in violence.<sup>2</sup>

In this independence period, some MAGs have been influenced by and affiliated with political associations, leading to the instigation of conflict by MAGs.<sup>3</sup> Some MAGs were involved in the violence of the 2006 crisis,<sup>4</sup> and some of these MAGs continue to provoke violence both at home and abroad.<sup>5</sup>

Conflict between MAGs from 2007 to 2013 has posed negative consequences for national stability. In response, the government issued a resolution to dissolve the most notorious MAGs, such as PSHT, KORK, and IKS.<sup>6</sup> Despite the passing of an official resolution in the National Parliament, the government faces challenges in thwarting MAGs, who continued to recruit and train new members even in the end of 2014.

Some MAGs have organized themselves and sent members to Indonesia to attend training and graduation.<sup>7</sup> This seems to signify that MAG training activities are still underway in this nation. Group members are able to organize with peers abroad to orient and train new members. One group, PSHT, was first organized in Indonesia but has established its “training center” in Timor-Leste in 2005.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, communities in Viqueque and other districts have informed authorities that MAGs continue to recruit and train new members at night. These communities have

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<sup>2</sup> FM Report: Mahein's Voice No. 93: A Lesson in Moving Forward with New Challenge to National Stability. Available at: [http://www.fundasaunmahein.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/MNL\\_Nu.93\\_26122014-Situasaun-Siguransapdf.pdf](http://www.fundasaunmahein.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/MNL_Nu.93_26122014-Situasaun-Siguransapdf.pdf). Access on 29 December 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Ramos Naikoli, Antonio. Compromises of Martial Art Groups and Rituals for Stability, Security, and Continued Sovereignty. Available at: <http://forum-haksesuk.blogspot.com/2011/06/kompromisu-artes-marciais-no-rituais-ba.html>

<sup>4</sup> Belun Report. Dynamic Complicity and Violence Linked to Martial Arts in Timor-Leste.

<sup>5</sup> Martial Arts are forbidden in this nation. Explode in Abroad. Available at <http://www.fundasaunmahein.org/2013/08/07/violence-quelled-at-home-explodes-abroad/>

<sup>6</sup> Belun Report. Dynamic Complicity and Violence Linked to Martial Arts in Timor-Leste.

<sup>7</sup> FM's monitoring at the end of 2014. The Patrol Border Unit (PBU) post in Mota Ain arrested members of PSHT who traveled to Indonesia for graduation. The members were turned over to the District Commander of Maliana.

<sup>8</sup> Refer to the PSHT Portal. <http://www.shterate.com/sambutan-ulang-tahun-padepokan-wesi-aji-psht-semarang/>



alerted the police, but there has not yet been any concrete action to combat these groups. It has also leaked that some groups are affiliate with political parties as well. During training sessions, trainers and coaches have been known to discuss the platform of the affiliated party for the upcoming 2017 parliamentary election.<sup>9</sup> FM believes that such practices will continue to occur, because there has not been proper socialization and monitoring to support the resolution..

### **The Resolution and its Execution**

In 2013, these MAGs should be totally dissolved, as ordered by the government resolution and its subsequent implementation. Have there been any socialization efforts attached to this implementation? Furthermore, has there been any monitoring of the execution of this resolution by security authorities? This is one side to consider.

Meanwhile, have there been any re-integration programs for communities? If not, why? If former MAG combatants are abandoned, they may very well be recruited by others to partake in crime in conflict. Furthermore, why does MAG-related conflict continue to occur in communities? We can conclude that MAGs still exist.

Ex-members of MAGs have not been re-integrated into their respective communities. This issue should receive attention from state authorities. How can we help re-integrate former members of MAGs into their community, so that they can feel a part of a group? Without acceptance into communities, MAG groups have continued operating within their own interest and even instigating violence.

Due to the lack of socialization and monitoring efforts, this process of re-integration has worsened. Indeed, MAGs are increasingly involved in murder, vandalism, and arson across the country.

In 2014, FM has logged the MAG-related incidents following the resolution. A devastating incident took place in Baucau, where three people died and others were wounded. There was also destruction of property, with some individuals losing their homes and their animals. According to FM's monitoring efforts, this incident could be linked PSHT and IKS, two prominent MAGs.

The aforementioned incident took place on 22 December, 2014 in Ro-Ulo hamlet, Bahu village, Baucau district. An unknown group assaulted two young men, killing one at the scene. These two men were on their way home after visiting family, when they were

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<sup>9</sup> FM's monitoring of people discussing the activities of MAGs in Viqueque district on December 2014.



suddenly assaulted opposite the cathedral by an unknown group. A clear motive for the incident has not yet been determined, but it is suspected to relate to inter-MAG issues.<sup>10</sup>

On 30 December 2014, at the Laga administrative post in Nunira village, a man was killed and many more were injured. This incident is related to conflict between PSHT and IKS, two martial arts groups.<sup>11</sup>

A similar incident took place in Baucau, in retaliation for the homicide that occurred at administrative post in Laga. A former member of IKS beat a member of PSHT to death at the Laga administrative post in Buruma village.<sup>12</sup>

According to FM's monitoring, communities have informed police authorities about these various issues, but these youth groups continue to organize effectively and problematically. Rather suspiciously, these issues have not attracted strong attention from the police, and some citizens suspect that police members are involved in these martial arts groups.

The police response to the conflict in Baucau was not quick enough. As a result, three people were killed, houses were burned, and animals were killed. Interestingly enough, this conflict predominantly involved youth.

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<sup>10</sup> FM's monitoring of MAG activities that took place at the administrative post in Laga, Baucau in 2014.

<sup>11</sup> FM's monitoring of MAG activities that took place at the administrative post in Laga, Baucau in 2014.

<sup>12</sup> FM's monitoring of MAG activities that took place at the administrative post in Laga, Baucau in 2014.



### **MAG Conflict Responsible for the Killing of Animals in Baucau in 2014**



**Photo:** Fundasaun Mahein (FM), 2014

Such incidents affected the movement of the general population as well, as checkpoints were instituted on the roads. A group of youths involved in the incident were stopped at a check point on a public street, but the police authorities took no action against them. In response, the government decided to initiate a joint intervention by the PNTL and F-FDTL to help secure the situation in Baucau.

Another incident took place in Dili, where a man was murdered. The victim was stabbed by another man on 30 December 2014 in Beto Naroman hamlet, Comoro village, Dom-Aleixo sub-district. The motive of this attack is not yet known, because the suspect escaped and has not yet been found. However, sources have revealed that this incident was related to MAG rivalries. The victim was involved in IKS, and the suspect is thought to be a member of PSHT.<sup>13</sup>

As mentioned above, the government took action to restore public order by holding an oath ceremony on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2015 for active members of the F-FDTL and PNTL who are involved in PSHT, IKS, KORK, and other MAGs. This ceremony was led directly by the Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão and the Minister of Defense and Security at the government palace in Dili.

### **An Oath for the Members of FALINTIL-FDTL and PNTL**

Members of the PNTL and the F-FDTL who were involved in MAGs swore at the government palace that they will no longer participate in MAGs. This ceremony, which commenced with a military parade, was led by Prime Minister Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao and the Minister of Defense and Security on Tuesday, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

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<sup>13</sup> FM's monitoring of MAG activities that took place in Dom-Aleixo, Dili in 2014.



At least 288 members of PNTL and F-FDTL attended in the oath ceremony. Among them were 145 formerly affiliated with PSHT, 88 with IKS, and 55 with KORK. They swore their allegiance for the RDTL and the people of this nation, under the flags of their respective institutions. At the ceremony, they swore to not commit further MAG-related problems in the future, and they swore to obey the laws and the constitution of Timor-Leste.

This oath was initiated by the government as a way to strengthen the internal discipline and loyalty of the PNTL and the F-FDTL. Prime Minister Xanana warned that these oath-taking personnel, if caught continuing their MAG activities, would immediately dismissed from the military and police institutions. The PM asked attending personnel to act in the interest of their institutions, rather than that of MAG's.

The state does not force anyone to join the PNTL and the F-FDTL. As such, when individuals join these institutions, they should demonstrate a desire to defend public safety and public order. Their chief interest should be in serving the people and the state, not the monetary compensation for doing so.

*"I've heard that some members of the PNTL train our youths then send them to Kupang, swearing for the Merah Putih flag. Furthermore, some members of the F-FDTL tell youths not to show fear, because they are backing them. I do not like this. Therefore, you have been brought here to swear. In the future, there will be no more MAGs inside the PNTL and F-FDTL institutions"<sup>14</sup>*

The PNTL General Commander will continue to be wary of police members who are still involved in MAGs and also those who did not participate in the oath ceremony under the RDTL flag. As mentioned above, the oath forbade security personnel from involvement in MAGs in the future.

The police commissary, Afonso de Jesus, informed that:

*"We know that about 174 members of the PNTL were involved in MAGs. More than 100 participated in this oath ceremony at the government palace, and some did not. In response, the command will contact those who did not attend in such ceremony. Commissary Afonso added that, after swearing, members have continued their involvement in the referred groups. If leadership collects strong evidence against any member, there will be zero tolerance, and the member will be dismissed."<sup>15</sup>*

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<sup>14</sup> 288 PNTL and F-FDTL members swore to leave MAGs. Available at <http://www.pntl.tl/2015/01/14/pntl-no-f-ftdl-288-juramentu-hodi-hakotu-ho-arte-marsiais/>. Access on 19 January 2015.

<sup>15</sup> General Commander continues call members of the PNTL who were formerly involve in MAGs to participate in the swearing process. Available at <http://www.pntl.tl/2015/01/15/kj-kontinua-bolu-membru-pntl-neebe-involve-gam-hodi-tuir-juramentu/>. Accessed on 19 January 2015.





FM appreciates the government's action against PNTL candidates who were involved in MAGs groups. Known perpetrators were dismissed from the PNTL before participating in the training in the beginning of 2015.<sup>16</sup> However, these investigations and dismissals should be based upon concrete laws and rules. Individuals who are found guilty of involvement in MAGs after taking part in the January 13<sup>th</sup> oath ceremony should be dismissed from their respective institutions, because this oath is very important. In the future, candidates should swear their loyalty and responsibility to their institutions before joining them.

Politicians and common citizens alike believe that this oath will not ensure the neutrality of the military and police. True, the oath will make members worried about the consequences of MAG involvement. This oath is, indeed, an important thing, but these members had already made oaths to their institutions before.

FM believes that, in order to end MAG conflict and the involvement of F-FDTL and PNTL personnel in such, guilty security personnel should be dismissed. Their very presence at the oath ceremony suggests that they are involved in MAGs. To date, all strata of society are concerned with the involvement of security personnel in MAGs, but there has not yet been any concrete evidence to support these claims.

## **Conclusion**

Conflict of martial art groups (MAGs) will never end and will become a threat for the national stability, so the oath ceremony will be meaningless. In 2008 members of MAGs had made an oath, but did not ensure the stability and conflicts of MAGs. Moreover, the government has issued a resolution in 2012 to suspend the MAGs activities, however, conflict between MAGs continue taken place. In 2013 there was another resolution from the government to close totally activities of MAGs such as PSHT, IKS and KORK, but the exercises activities continue going on, justifying as well that some other groups past the border territory to Indonesia to get "Rank/graduation", the MAGs continue happening in 2014.

In early 2012, another oath was made by members of the F-FDTL and PNTL to not continue their involvement in MAGs. The hope was that, by saying the oath, members of the F-FDTL and PNTL would end their affiliations with MAGs and contribute positively to national stability.

## **Recommendations**

1. Conduct socialization and monitoring for the resolution mandating the dissolution of MAGs (PSHT, IKS, and KORK).

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<sup>16</sup> Refer to media publications on 19 January 2015.



2. Re-integrate former members of MAGs back into communities with proper treatment.
3. The F-FDTL and PNTL should screen their members for past involvement in MAGs.
4. Lack of Past Involvement in MAGs should become an essential criterion in the recruitment process of the F-FDTL and PNTL.
5. Actions by justice authorities and security institutions against MAGs should be strong.



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Intervention of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense and Security in the oath ceremony for members of the F-FDTL and PNTL who were formerly involved in martial art groups (MAGs), such as PSHT, IKS and KORK. This took place on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2014 at the government palace in Dili.

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