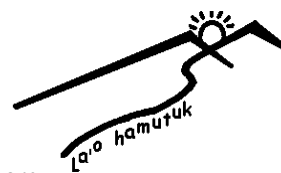


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Press release

La'ó Hamutuk Congratulates Australia for Ending the Prosecution of Bernard Collaery and Urges them to Continue to Respect Timor-Leste's Sovereignty

12 July 2022

La'ó Hamutuk appreciates the decision of Australia's Attorney-General to end the prosecution against Bernard Collaery. This overdue decision cannot undo the shameful history of Australia's bugging Timor-Leste's Government Palace in 2004, during the negotiations which led to the 2006 CMATS Treaty dividing oil revenues and delaying discussion of the maritime boundary between the two countries. The 2004 spying was done by Australian intelligence agents, one whom, known as "Witness K", was also prosecuted, along with his attorney Bernard Collaery, when he blew the whistle on the illegal espionage.

To rebuild good neighborly relations between Australia and Timor-Leste, the Australian government should recognize that it has blatantly violated Timor-Leste's sovereignty, and return to policies of mutual respect between the two nations. Healthy diplomacy needs to address past transgressions, and Australia should return more than \$5 billion it took in from oil and gas fields that it now agrees are in Timor-Leste's territory.

We also think that mutual respect as neighbors means supporting each other as partners, not taking advantage of Timor-Leste's weaker economy, less experienced administration, and limited human resources to obtain benefits for Australia at the expense of Timor-Leste's people. This should be reflected by cancelling some future projects, including the planned Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) at Bayu-Undan which would exploit Timor-Leste's vulnerability to enable the carbon-intensive Barossa project in Australia, further damaging the global and local climate.

In addition, we suggest that Australia should pardon "Witness K", who was pressured into pleading guilty to a crime he did not commit. "Witness K" used proper channels to report an inappropriate action he was ordered to carry out, and should be unconditionally exonerated. Both he and Bernard Collaery have been good and honorable friends to Timor-Leste, and Australia should compensate them for the harm that unjust prosecution has already inflicted on them.

As a Timorese civil society organization, the Timor-Leste Institute for Development Monitoring and Analysis (La'ó Hamutuk) has studied and advocated on the maritime boundary, petroleum development, and other aspects of the relationship between Timor-Leste and Australia for more than two decades, sometimes alone and often in collaboration with the Independent Information Center for the Timor Sea (CIITT), the Movement Against the Occupation of the Timor Sea (MKOTT) and the international Timor Sea Justice Campaign (TSJC).

As we applaud the 2019 Maritime Boundary Treaty and the dropping of the charges against Bernard Collaery, we continue to struggle for a mutually respectful relationship.

For more information on the prosecution of Collaery and "Witness K", see

<https://www.laohamutuk.org/Oil/Boundary/Collaery/20Collaery.htm>

For links to La'ó Hamutuk's submissions and articles on the Australia-Timor-Leste relationship, see

<https://www.laohamutuk.org/Oil/OilIndex.html#Boundaries>.