



TIMOR-LESTE 20TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIONS OVERVIEW

Australia and Timor-Leste are close neighbours, with a shared history and strong people-to-people links.

Australia has been at the forefront of international support for Timor-Leste since its independence in 2002, and remains Timor-Leste's largest partner in development and security.

In 2019, Australia will join the people and Government of Timor-Leste to commemorate the 20th anniversary of:

- Popular Consultation, which saw the Timorese people vote overwhelmingly for their nation's independence
- UN mandated missions deployed in Timor-Leste – United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET), International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) and United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET).

Popular Consultation

The Popular Consultation was a referendum held on 30 August 1999 in Timor-Leste.

UNAMET was responsible for organising and conducting the Popular Consultation, which included Australian police and election monitors. The referendum was held to decide whether Timor-Leste would remain as an autonomous region of Indonesia, or become an independent nation.

The result was overwhelming, and saw 78.5% of the people vote in favour of independence.

After the outcome was announced, there were violent clashes in the region which sparked a humanitarian and security crisis. Militia violence destroyed 70% of the country's infrastructure and displaced 75% of the population.

In response to the situation, the United Nations Security Council established INTERFET with a mandate to restore peace and security in Timor-Leste.

INTERFET

INTERFET was a multinational peacekeeping force led by Australia, deployed to Timor-Leste from 20 September 1999 to 28 February 2000.

The force included over 20 countries including:

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|-------------|-----------|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| • Australia | • Fiji | • Jordan | • Norway | • Thailand |
| • Brazil | • France | • Kenya | • Philippines | • United Kingdom |
| • Canada | • Germany | • Malaysia | • Portugal | • United States. |
| • Denmark | • Ireland | • New Zealand | • Singapore | |
| • Egypt | • Italy | | • South Korea | |

INTERFET's principal task was to restore peace and security in Timor-Leste and Australian police and defence personnel served as members of the force.

The deployment of INTERFET was the first step in securing the outcome of the Popular Consultation to facilitate the transfer of government to the people of Timor-Leste.



On 28 February 2000, INTERFET handed over command of military operations to UNTAET, to administer transition to Timor-Leste's independence.

The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste entered into force on 20 May 2002.

Australia worked in partnership with the United Nations to maintain a stable security environment to help achieve democracy, security and economic development for the local population.

Australia and Timor-Leste today

Many Australians are actively engaged with Timor-Leste through Australian state, territory and local governments, non-government organisations, the private sector, learning institutions and friendship groups.

Australia is Timor-Leste's largest development partner and supports Timor-Leste's objectives to diversify its economy and create sustainable growth and jobs.

Our development partnership focuses on improving rural livelihoods, enhancing human development outcomes and strengthening governance. Our security ties are strengthened through defence, policing and policy capacity building programs.

The Australia and Timor-Leste relationship is deepening and broadening our bilateral cooperation across defence, policing and development, and working together in the Indo-Pacific to support our shared interests in a peaceful and prosperous region.



Commemorative events

The Government of Timor-Leste established a [20th Anniversary Organising Committee](#) to develop a program of events to commemorate Popular Consultation and the arrival of subsequent UN mandated missions in Timor-Leste. The Government of Timor-Leste has published the programme of events for August (Popular Consultation) [on their website](#).

If you are planning to attend the commemorations, review the latest [travel advice for Timor-Leste](#), [subscribe to travel advice](#) on the Smartraveller website and follow [the Australian Embassy in Timor-Leste](#).

In a consular emergency, contact the 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre on +61 6261 3305 from overseas or 1300 555 135 from within Australia.