



Language

In December 1975 East Timor was on the point of becoming independent from Portugal when it was invaded by Indonesia. Armed resistance failed to protect the population, with around 60,000 East Timorese slaughtered and Indonesia installing a formidable apparatus of repression. FRETILIN reconsidered its strategy and from 1987 onwards prioritised clandestine urban organising and international work over armed struggle. The initiative passed to a younger generation, with the Catholic Church also playing an active role. Despite UN condemnation of the Indonesian occupation, western governments had effectively acquiesced with Indonesia. Independent journalists could only enter East Timor by subterfuge until the papal visit of 1989, which provided the opportunity for the first large peaceful demonstration to be publicized in the west. On 12 November 1991, Indonesian troops attacked the funeral procession for an activist shot by the military, killing at least 250 people. Western reporters were present, including TV journalist Max Stahl who successfully smuggled his footage out of the country. The Dili massacre became the signal for an intensified movement using nonviolent forms of protest inside East Timor, and also for increased international pressure. There was a lively transnational support campaign by activists in Australia, North America and Britain, while the East Timorese – particularly students – began to make links with the growing opposition to Suharto's rule inside Indonesia.

Guerrilla forces were not disbanded but were held in reserve. However, in 1999 it was significant that they strategically refrained from engagement when Indonesia militia and soldiers began a campaign of punitive violence against East Timorese (in reaction to the Indonesian and Portuguese agreement to hold a referendum on independence). Consequently there was international military intervention under UN auspices, which paved the way to East Timor gaining independence in 2002.

Cristalis, Irena, [Bitter Dawn: East Timor – A People's History](#) [1], [2002], London, Zed Books, 2009, pp. 384

Dunn, James, [East Timor: A Rough Passage to Independence](#) [2], Double Bay NSW, Longueville, 2004, pp. 430

Fukuda, Chisako M., [Peace through Nonviolent Action: The East Timorese Resistance Movement's Strategy for Engagement](#) [3], Pacifica Review, Vol. 12, issue 1 (February), 2000, pp. 17-31

Hess, David ; Martin, Brian, [Repression, backfire and the theory of transformative events](#) [4], Mobilization, Vol. 11, issue 1 (June), 2006, pp. 249-267

Martin, Brian ; Varney, Wendy ; Vickers, Adrian, [Political Jiu-Jitsu against Indonesian Repression: Studying Lower Profile Nonviolent Resistance](#) [5], Pacifica Review, Vol. 13, issue 2 (June), 2001, pp. 143-156

Compares the successful protests against Suharto in 1998 with the problems of resisting repression inside Indonesia 1965-66 and in East Timor after 1975. Brian Martin's articles are online at: <http://www.bmartin.cc/pubs> [6]

Mason, Chrstine, [Women, Violence and Nonviolent Resistance in East Timor](#) [7], Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 42, issue 6, 2005, pp. 737-749

Montiel, Cristina Jayme, [Political Psychology of Nonviolent Democratic transitions in Southeast Asia](#) [8], Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 62, issue 1 (February), 2006, pp. 173-190

Simpson, Brad, [Solidarity in an Age of Globalization: The Transnational Movement for East Timor and US Foreign Policy](#) [9], Peace and Change, Vol. 29, issue 3 & 4 (July), 2004, pp. 453-482



Stephan, Maria J., [Fighting for Statehood: The role of civilian-based resistance in the East Timorese, Palestinian and Kosovo Albanian self-determination movements](#) [10], Fletcher Forum of World Affairs (Tufts University), Vol. 30, issue 2 (summer), 2006, pp. 57-69

Tanter, Richard ; Selden, Mark ; Shalom, Stephen R., [Bitter Flowers, Sweet Flowers: East Timor, Indonesia, and the World Community](#) [11], Lanham MA, Rowman and Littlefield, 2001, pp. 312

Part I 'East Timor: Resistance, Repression and the Road to Independence' focuses particularly on the role of the National Council of the Timorese Resistance, the Catholic Church and the student movement.

See also:

Brian Martin, [Justice Ignited: The Dynamics of Backfire](#) [12], (A. 1.b. Strategic Theory, Dynamics, Methods and Movements [13]), chapter 3 'Dili', pp. 23-33.

Erica Chenoweth; Maria J. Stephan, [Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict](#) [14], International Security, 2008, which includes a summary of the East Timorese resistance.

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Links

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- [2] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2004/east-timor-rough-passage-independence>
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- [11] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2001/bitter-flowers-sweet-flowers-east-timor-indonesia-and-world-community>
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- [14] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2008/why-civil-resistance-works-strategic-logic-nonviolent-conflict>