

The Events

1974

The “Carnation Revolution” in Portugal sees the end of the long-running fascist Salazar-Caetano regime. Portugal moves to end withdraw from its African and Asian possessions.

Mid 1974-early 1975

Political parties emerge in East Timor such as the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT) and the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor, known as Fretilin.

Indonesian Armed Forces and Police (ABRI) conduct "Operation Komodo", an attempt to undermine any independence for East Timor which includes military activity near the East Timor/Indonesia border. The Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam meets President Suharto in Wonosobo, a resort town in Central Java, and agrees that the eventual integration of East Timor into the Republic of Indonesia is inevitable.

1975

July Portugal instigates a process of decolonisation for East Timor.

Colonial control is set to end in October 1978

August The UDT leadership launches a coup in Dili to wrest power from the Portuguese and halt the growing popularity of Fretilin. In response, Fretilin takes control of the capital and after a three week civil war gains control of the rest of the country. Each side inflicts deaths and suffering on the other. Timor is at peace again by September 1975. However, Indonesian troops continue to infiltrate border regions attacking civilians and destroying crops, attempting to create the illusion that civil unrest continues and that anarchy prevails. This chaos is used by Indonesia to justify invasion "to restore order".

August 27 The Portuguese Governor and administration withdraw from Dili to the island of Atauro.

October 16 Five Australian-based journalists (two Australian, one New Zealander and two British) are killed at Balibó in East Timor by Indonesian troops, preventing them from reporting on the invasion.

November 28 With the fall of Batugade, Balibó and Maliana to the Indonesians in October, and of Atabae in November, and in the face of increasing destabilisation orchestrated by Indonesia and of international indifference, Fretilin unilaterally declares the independence of East Timor in the hope that the UN might support the new state.

December 6 US President Gerald Ford and US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger banquet with President Suharto in Jakarta, giving a “green light” to the invasion. The CIA had convinced the Indonesians to postpone the invasion from December 5 to allow Ford and Kissinger time to leave Indonesia.

December 7 Indonesia invades East Timor. At dawn, Indonesian troops launch a massive attack on Dili from sea and air, looting, raping and killing indiscriminately. Many civilians are killed and many flee with Fretilin forces in to the mountains. Simultaneous attacks occurred on Baucau and Likisa to the east and west of Dili. On December 8 Indonesian troops execute about 80 civilians on the Dili wharf, including women, as well as the only remaining foreigner, journalist Roger East.

December The UN General Assembly condemns the Indonesian invasion and the Security Council calls on Indonesia to withdraw its armed forces from East Timor.

Australian intelligence estimates that Indonesia has 15,000 to 20,000 troops in East Timor.

Many Timorese die violently during and soon after the invasion. Unlawful killings and torture account for great numbers. The Indonesian security forces constantly use starvation of East Timorese civilians as a weapon of war. By forced re-settlement and restrictions on food production they intentionally impose conditions which cannot sustain life, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths.

1976

Indonesia claims an “act of integration” has taken place but the UN disagrees. Australia gives de facto recognition to the annexation, and begins informal negotiations over the seabed boundary for Timor Gap oil with the Indonesian Government.

From **1975** onwards the UN General Assembly continually rejects integration and calls for the withdrawal of Indonesian troops and for an act of self-determination to be held in East Timor. Australia repeatedly argues that the matter of East Timor be taken off the UN agenda.

1978

January 20: The Australian Government gives de facto recognition to Indonesia’s occupation of East Timor.

December 31: Fretilin’s President, Nicolau Lobato, is shot and killed by Indonesian troops.

Early 1980: “Xanana” (José Alexandre Gusmão) is chosen as the new leader of the Timorese resistance. East Timor is designated as official resettlement area for Indonesian transmigrants from Java and Bali.

1981

August 19: The forced recruitment of the East Timorese population into “fence of legs” operations begins, as part of Operasi Keamanan.

1982

At least 500 East Timorese were massacred by Indonesian troops at the Shrine of St Antony, near Lacluta in September 1981.

1983

200-330 people are executed by Indonesian troops in the village of Kraras, near Vikeke.

September 9: A state of emergency is declared in East Timor by the Indonesian Government. President Suharto orders a “clean sweep” of East Timor.

1984

Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke recognises Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor on behalf of the Labour Government. Reports from East Timor describe intense bombardment by the Indonesian air force between August 1983 and 1984.

The Indonesian and Australian Governments announce that they will jointly develop the petroleum resources of the Timor Gap.



1987

March 20: A new offensive is launched by the Indonesian military, deploying 30,000 troops.

1988: Creation of the CNRM (National Council of Maubere Resistance) an inclusive umbrella organisation of the resistance, under the leadership of Xanana Gusmão.

For the first time, the 12 European Community Governments adopt a common opposition on East Timor, agreeing to support the UN Secretary-General's efforts at achieving a fair and internationally acceptable settlement which "will safeguard the rights of the people of East Timor and their cultural identity".

President Suharto announces that from January 1989 eight of East Timor's 13 districts will be opened up to entry by Indonesians and foreigners.

1989: Feeling that the country is sufficiently subjugated, Indonesia opens the territory and begins the policy of "transmigration" aimed at relocating tens of thousands of families from Indonesia in East Timor.

February 6: Mgr Belo writes to the UN Secretary-General calling upon the UN to hold a referendum on the future of the territory, denouncing the brutality of the Indonesian occupation, asking that there be an act of self-determination, concluding "We are dying as a people and as a nation".

October 12: Pope John Paul II visits Dili. He consecrates the Cathedral and celebrates Mass in the Tetun language in the open air at Taci-Tolu before a congregation of 100,000. At the end of the Mass, a demonstration takes place supporting independence. The demonstrators are beaten by the police, and the scene is observed and photographed by foreign journalists. Forty young people are arrested and interrogated after the Pope's visit and many are tortured.

December 11: The Australian and Indonesian Governments sign a treaty to jointly explore the Timor Gap area.

1991 **November 12** Santa Cruz Massacre