

**NORTHERN TERRITORY BAR ASSOCIATION****MEDIA RELEASE**

The Northern Territory Bar Association has expressed its concern about recent interventions by the Timor Leste Government in the operation of the Courts in Timor Leste.

“The recent actions by the Government in forcing the departure of a number of foreign judges and lawyers working in the justice system pose a serious threat to the fact and appearance of the independence of the Timor Leste Judiciary”, the President of the Northern Territory Bar Association, Mr Alistair Wyvill SC, said.

Mr Wyvill, who spent three days in Dili last week speaking to local judges and lawyers about these developments, also expressed concern that it appeared that this intervention may have been motivated by a desire to prevent the prosecution of a number of persons with connections to the Government. “Obviously, if there was any such connection, it would be a matter of very serious concern”, he noted. Finally, he said that, “Of the gravest concern were the reports I received of threats to the lives of local judges. The Government of Timor Leste must guarantee the safety of its judges if the rule of law is to survive and prosper in Timor Leste.”

At its annual general meeting held yesterday, the Northern Territory Bar Association resolved to call upon the Government of Timor Leste:

1. to confirm its unconditional commitment to upholding the rule of law;
2. to refrain from any action or dealing with the judiciary or with the judges of Timor Leste which is not in accordance with the Constitution and laws of Timor Leste;
3. to ensure that any issues of concern which it may have with the actions of any judge are raised and dealt with according to law and with respect for the independence of judges and the judiciary;
4. to unconditionally guarantee the safety and welfare of Timorese judges and their families.

Mr Wyvill’s report on relations between the Government and the Judiciary following his visit to Timor Leste may be found on the NTBA’s website: [www.ntba.asn.au](http://www.ntba.asn.au). For further information please contact Mr Wyvill on 08 8982 4700.

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