



Judicial Conference of Australia

**STATEMENT BY THE HON JUSTICE STEVEN RARES
PRESIDENT, JUDICIAL CONFERENCE OF AUSTRALIA
28th November 2014**

**AUSTRALIAN JUDGES GRAVELY CONCERNED ABOUT
INTERFERENCE WITH TIMOR-LESTE JUDICIARY**

The President of Australia's representative body for Australia's judiciary, the Judicial Conference of Australia (JCA), has today written to Timor-Leste's President, Taur Matan Ruak, and its Prime Minister, Xanana Gusmão, expressing concern about recent actions by the Government and Parliament of Timor-Leste against foreign members of its judiciary.

The Government abruptly cancelled the visas of all foreign judges, thus effectively preventing them carrying out their work, in particular hearing cases involving alleged corruption by high officials.

Justice Steven Rares, the JCA's President, strongly condemned these most serious interferences with the independent and effective operation of Timor-Leste's courts and with the rule of law.

Justice Rares reminded the President and Prime Minister that the principles of the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary are enshrined in the Timor-Leste Constitution. He said that the Constitution provides a specific means for the disciplining of judges and if the Government, or Parliament, act outside those constitutional processes, democracy itself, and the rule of law, are threatened and potentially

undermined.

The JCA strongly urged Timor-Leste's President and Prime Minister to maintain and support their country's constitutional requirement for the independence of the judiciary, and for the proper constitutional processes to be followed.

A copy of the President's letter to the President and Prime Minister of Timor-Leste is attached.

For further information contact:

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