



An Australian soldier, a member of the multinational peacekeeping force in East Timor, stands amid the ruins of what was Ainaro's hospital.

Photo: Jon Lewis

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Madison's newest sister city



Photo : Lisa Rosen

*with the world's newest country,
East Timor!*

*Join us ...
Madison ...*

is a community with a strong tradition of international solidarity on peace and social justice issues. During the brutal Indonesian military occupation of East Timor, we worked to end American complicity in the genocide of the Timorese. Now that their bravery and persistence has won them their country back, we can begin a direct, open dialogue and exchange of ideas and skills with the East Timorese.

Ainaro ...

is a small mountain town in the southwest of East Timor. Ainaro's main resources are its delicious organic coffee and aromatic sandalwood trees. It is a diverse community, where Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims are neighbors.

Unfortunately, Ainaro was also home to a large contingent of Indonesian military-backed militias in the months leading up to the August 30th, 1999 referendum on independence. An observer of the ballot in Ainaro commented: *"The day of the vote was amazing. We got to the main polling station at about 6 am, and over half the town was there waiting in line for the polls to open at 7... Inside the ballot rooms many people kissed their ballots before putting them in the boxes... About a half-hour after the polling started,*

a small bomb went off outside- nobody was hurt, and although everyone skittered a few feet, after a moment they all went back to their places in line, undeterred."

According to a visitor to Ainaro following the military's post-ballot destruction, *"just about every building in Ainaro is burnt out... [many people] have been forcefully sent to [Indonesian] West Timor camps."*

*The Madison-Ainaro
Sister-City Alliance ...*

is a group of Madisonians committed to working with the people of Ainaro, East Timor as they rebuild their community and participate in establishing their newly independent country. We have been inspired to work for justice in both the U.S. and East Timor by the nonviolent struggle of the East Timorese for an independent homeland.

A joint American/East Timorese mission in January and February, 2000, traveled throughout East Timor to assess community needs. The people of Ainaro shared their vision for the future, and articulated how friends overseas can help.

The Ainaro community asked for a sister city relationship, in addition to assistance with medical, women's, educational, farming and other projects.

We believe that a sister city relationship with Ainaro is needed now to assist in the rebuilding of the community and to

pressure for the return of Timorese held against their will in Indonesian refugee camps. We also believe that international solidarity is needed to assure that the transitional United Nations administration and international aid groups in East Timor work with and are respectful of the Timorese and their culture. Lastly, we see a great need for monitoring the activities of international financial institutions in East Timor. Madison's city council unanimously supported our sister relationship by declaring Ainaro an official sister city in February 2001, the first East Timorese sister city in the U.S.

Madison-Ainaro Sister City Alliance
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Phone/
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Contributions can be made to the East Timor Action Network, with "MASA" in the memo line. Tax-deductible contributions over \$50 can be made to the Foundation for International Scientific Cooperation, with "East Timor" in the memo line. Thank you for your support!