

## FORTE DE MAUBARA

**Colonial history:** The eastern half of the island Timor had been a colony of Portugal since the early 16th century, while the western half was controlled by The Netherlands, through the East Indies Company (VOC). The main reason why both colonizers were interested in Timor was its sandalwood, which was traded in Europe.

The borders were not clearly defined yet, and part of what is now Timor-Leste was in the hands of The Netherlands, including Maubara. Remains of this era are still visible, such as the Forte de Maubara which was built by The Netherlands in 1756.

The border between Portuguese Timor and the East Indies Company was formally decided in 1859 with the Treaty of Lisbon. As part of the Treaty of Lisbon, Maubara was handed over to the Portuguese.

In exchange for Maubara, the East Indies Company was given Flores, which was a part of the Portuguese colony until then. Therefore, Flores and West Timor became part of Indonesia when it claimed its independence from the Netherlands shortly after the Second World War.

The reason why this fort is visited during the Walk against Impunity is that in The Netherlands nowadays most people are not aware of the historical fact that part of Timor-Leste used to be colonized by The Netherlands through the East Indies Company. Deviding the island Timor in two halves was a decision made by Portugal and The Netherlands, not a decision made by the Timorese people who have been facing the historical, political and social consequences ever since.

**More recent history:** Maubara was where the notoriously violent pro-Indonesian militia Besi Merah Putih was founded in 1998, with direct support from the Indonesian Army.

