

Balibo, 15 October 2015

Dear Shirley,

We have never met in person, but I am one of your many long-distance friends. My name is Francis Janssen and I am from The Netherlands. I am currently in Balibo, Timor-Leste, for the Walk Against Impunity.

The Walk Against Impunity is a five-days walk from Dili to Balibo. I did not walk alone, six Timorese activists joined me walking the 130 km. On our first day of the Walk, seven Timorese cyclists joined by bicycle from Dili to Liquica to support us.

We started our walk at the monument for Sander Thoenes, the Dutch journalist who was murdered by Indonesian military in Dili, September 1999. Then to Santa Cruz Cemetery for obvious reasons and on to Liquica, where over 200 Timorese were killed at the church, in April 1999. On the fifth day, we reached Balibo - one day before the 16th of October.

Why this walk?

I had many reasons to initiate this walk against impunity, I will name three.

First of all, this walk is to pay respect to Gary Cunningham, Tony Stewart, Malcolm Rennie, Brian Peters and your late husband Greg Shackleton... and to Roger East... Sander Thoenes... Agus Muliawan... Bernardino Guterres... all these journalists and to all the Timorese victims of the 24 years of Indonesian occupation. I believe that walking from Dili to Balibo, exactly 40 years after the 16th of October 1975, may be an inspiring commemoration.

The second reason is a tribute to the people of Timor-Leste, who continued their struggle and regained their freedom after 24 years of illegal annexation by Indonesia.

Last, but certainly not least: what happened in Timor-Leste is still happening in Maluku and West-Papua today. No freedom of press, no freedom of expression, no freedom - while the people still struggle against occupation, oppression, violence... and impunity.

Impunity is a green light for perpetrators to continue and repeat, over and over again. This is why I feel we must continue to stand up against impunity.

I hereby send you my warmest greetings, as I sit on the doorstep of the Flag House in Balibo. We, the walkers and our back-up team, are with you today, Shirley - and with all the relatives of the Balibo Five.

May this Walk Against Impunity be an inspiration to young Timorese, international activists, and to all those who really care.

Yours sincerely,

Francis Janssen
in Balibo