



## Two dead after East Timor rally

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Two people have been killed in clashes between East Timor police and sacked soldiers, the latest violence since the cash-strapped government dismissed more than 500 soldiers earlier this month.

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It was unclear how many people were hurt, but a Reuters photographer on the scene said a hospital official had told him of 30 injuries.

"Two citizens were killed," police chief Paulo de Fatima Martins told Reuters by telephone. It was not immediately clear if the dead were former soldiers.

But the witness said East Timor police had fired into a crowd of hundreds of ex-soldiers and their supporters who were burning cars and throwing rocks.

"Police made an appeal, but they didn't listen ... They beat the police," Martins said.

The protesters dispersed after the shooting and police clamped down on security on the main roads of Dili, the seaside capital of the tiny country of about 1 million people, with the situation appearing under control by late afternoon.

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Police were visiting residential areas of Dili, calling on people to remain calm.

Friday's protest had been planned as the last in a series by the sacked soldiers.

A one-time Portuguese colony, East Timor, north of Australia and 2,100 km east of Jakarta, was invaded by Indonesia in 1975 and formally annexed the following year.

Its people voted overwhelmingly for independence in a 1999 referendum marked by bloodshed in which an estimated 1,000 people were killed.

Most of the violence was blamed on pro-Jakarta militia backed by elements of the Indonesian military.

After an interim period of UN administration, East Timor became independent in 2002.

One of the world's poorest countries, it has considerable energy resources but is only now starting to develop them.

Source: Reuters

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