The Honorable Dr. Condoleezza Rice  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

We have been watching the violence that has ensued in East Timor with a great deal of concern. Just months ago, East Timor was viewed as a model for international nation-building. However, today, the progress East Timor has made as a young democracy is under serious threat. The United Nations Security Council recently voted to renew its political mission in East Timor, and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has indicated that the return of peacekeeping forces is under consideration. At this crucial juncture, we urge you to support a robust United Nations mission that includes a significant police and peacekeeping presence – with all foreign troops under UN command – to ensure that East Timor continues to make progress on the path to democracy, stability, and self-sustainability. The East Timorese government has requested such a robust mission.

As you know, following East Timor’s vote for independence from Indonesia in 1999, militias backed by elements of the Indonesian military ravaged the country. Yet East Timor – with significant support from the United Nations and international community – was able to restore order and has made substantial strides toward stability and democracy as evidenced by a United Nations report stating that East Timor has “made remarkable progress in laying the foundations for a functioning civil society.” Additionally, an agreement with the Australian government on shared revenues from offshore oil and gas fields is beginning to provide critical funds to the government and in February 2006 members of the U.S. House of Representatives Democracy Assistance Commission visited East Timor to provide advice on structuring an accountable and transparent government.

However, much work remains and as the United Nations has rapidly scaled back its mission post-independence, serious problems within East Timor’s police and military infrastructure have been exposed. The recent violence is an indication that the United Nations cannot draw-down its presence precipitously, and that it must continue to play a critical nation-building role – assisting East Timor with its efforts to consolidate and expand on the gains it has made. Therefore, we respectfully request that U.N. Ambassador Bolton strongly support a United Nations mission to help maintain order and provide support at least through next year’s crucial parliamentary and presidential elections. This mission should focus on enhanced police assistance and training to prevent violence. Additionally, a United Nations mission should help East Timor address the deeply-rooted poverty and unemployment that plagues the nation; build strong public institutions that will ensure a stable and lasting democracy and promote rule of law; bring justice and reconciliation for crimes against humanity committed during the Indonesian military occupation; and investigate the recent criminal violence.
Supporting the development of strong and self-sustaining democracies throughout the world is a vital component of U.S. foreign policy. In this case, this goal would be best advanced by supporting a robust United Nations mission working in cooperation with a sovereign East Timorese government. We thank you for your attention and we look forward to working with you on this matter.

Sincerely,

Allyson Y. Schwartz  
Member of Congress

Tom Lantos  
Member of Congress

Epi F.H. Faleomavaega  
Member of Congress

Tammy Baldwin  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

James L. Oberstar  
Member of Congress

Michael R. McNulty  
Member of Congress

Patrick J. Kennedy  
Member of Congress

Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress

Christopher H. Smith  
Member of Congress

Nancy Pelosi  
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

Howard L. Berman  
Member of Congress

Edolphus Towns  
Member of Congress

Barney Frank  
Member of Congress
Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne
Member of Congress

Sam Farr
Member of Congress

Nita M. Lowey
Member of Congress

Edward J. Markey
Member of Congress

Timothy H. Bishop
Member of Congress

Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress

James R. Langevin
Member of Congress

David E. Price
Member of Congress

Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Michael M. Honda
Member of Congress

Joseph R. Pitts
Member of Congress

Jim McDermott
Member of Congress

Paul M. Trahan
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress
cc: Ambassador John R. Bolton

Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

Henry A. Waxman  
Member of Congress

Robert Wexler  
Member of Congress

Sherrod Brown  
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Dale E. Kildee  
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Barbara Lee  
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