

Brief biography of His Excellency Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão

His Excellency Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão is a former President, former Prime Minister and current Minister for Planning and Strategic Investment in the Timor-Leste Government. His Excellency also currently holds the position of Minister Mentor and is the Chief Negotiator for Timor-Leste's maritime boundary negotiations with Indonesia and Australia.



Following the death of the Resistance Leader, Nicolau Lobato in December 1978, Minister Gusmão reorganised and led the struggle for independence for 24 years. His Excellency was elected Leader of the Resistance in 1981 and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor (FALINTIL). Minister Gusmão was captured on 20 November 1992 and spent the next seven years in an Indonesian jail before being released in September 1999.

Following the restoration of independence, His Excellency served as the first President of the new nation of Timor-Leste from May 2002 to May 2007, and then Prime Minister from August 2007. Minister Gusmão was personally committed to the re-establishment of relations between Timor-Leste and Indonesia. In doing so, he helped achieve a level of reconciliation between two nations that might otherwise have experienced on-going instability.

Minister Gusmão voluntarily stepped down from the position of Prime Minister in February 2015 to allow a new generation of leaders to advance the nation. This transition is almost unparalleled in modern, post-colonial, political history and presents a contrast to a pattern in which the leaders of newly established countries then entrench themselves in long-term political power.

His Excellency has received numerous awards and accolades from governments and organisations around the world, including Doctor *honoris causa* from universities in Australia, Portugal, Brazil, Japan and Malaysia (most recently, in December 2015, Minister Gusmão was awarded a Doctorate of Letters, *honoris causa*, from the University of Melbourne, Australia). Notable among His Excellency's other awards, is Indonesia's highest medal of honour, which was bestowed on him in 2014 and also the Honorary Knighthood of the Grand Cross of the Order of St Michael and St George, which was awarded to His Excellency by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 2003.