



TOM HYLAND

Tom Hyland was born and lived all his life in Ballyfermot, Dublin. He worked as a bus driver on the No. 10 bus route to the UCD campus at Belfield. One night, while at home playing cards with his friends, Tom saw a television documentary called *Cold Blood: The Massacre of East Timor*. He was so upset by what he saw on this programme that first thing the following morning he telephoned the number that appeared on the screen. This was the beginning of his life's work on behalf of the people of East Timor.

East Timor is a small island in the Timor Sea north of Australia. For 400 years, until 1975, it was a colony of Portugal. While seeking independence in 1994, East Timor was invaded and taken over by Indonesia. During this period 200,000 people, almost one third of its population was massacred.

In response to what he saw, Tom became the founding member of the East Timor Ireland Solidarity Campaign, a human rights organisation established to support the East Timorese people in their struggle for human rights and independence. He has become one of the most famous human rights activists for East Timor and he has lobbied many heads of government.

As a direct result of Tom's work the United Nations sent a peacekeeping force into East Timor. The involvement of the Irish people in East Timor contributed to successful democratic governmental elections in 2001 and again in their Presidential elections in 2002. East Timor has also become one of the most recent members of the United Nations.