On 30 August 1999, the United Nations facilitated a referendum in present-day Timor-Leste. The vote resulted in an overwhelming majority (78.5%) of the East Timorese people supporting independence from Indonesia. It also triggered widespread violence carried out by the Indonesian occupying forces and their militias. The violence was brutal and displaced over 240,000 people to West Timor, Indonesia. Among the legacies left behind by the 24-year occupation of Timor-Leste were the severely disrupted social, cultural, and familial bonds that held East Timorese communities together. Today, most of those who were displaced have returned to their places of origin. Thousands of thousands remain living in former refugee camps and resettlement sites in West Timor. Many of them are growing older away from their homeland.

Together with her family, she would light candles to remember their ancestors and loved ones who have gone before them in Timor-Leste.

Return visits from West Timor to Timor-Leste are not always possible. People would need to have enough money to arrange for a passport, travel, buy US dollars, and until August 2019, a visa.

Avó Marta aspire to visit Lospalos, her ancestral land, but her body is now too frail to embark on the long journey back home. She also takes care of her great-grandchildren when other family members are at work or school.

Avó Marta sat in the middle of the room, cradled by her grandchildren and great-grandchildren on the floor, laughing quietly to her story. She spoke about how she learned to see family members on the other side of the border. halfway through her story, Avó Marta took the audio recorder from her hands and started singing a sad melody. With a trembling voice, she sang a song of displacement and family separation.

She said that she recently got in touch with their family in Timor-Leste. Younger members of her family and her grandchildren feel a special bond with the land.

Together with her family, she would light candles to remember their ancestors and friends who have gone before them in Timor-Leste.