

UNITED FRONT FOR DEMOCRATIC FIJI

Media Release

The integrity and credibility of the constitutional process

We note with concern the current disturbing developments in the constitutional process with the promulgation of Decree 64 of 2012 which undermines the mandate and independence of the Constitution Commission.

The decree drastically alters the constitutional process by removing the right of the people of Fiji to express their views on the draft constitution before it is presented to the President.

At the same time, we are alarmed by disclosures by Commission Chair Professor Yash Ghai that the Commission faces "massive interference and constant harassment" from the regime telling it what to do and what not to do which is making its work very difficult.

Decree 64 also sets aside the mandate of the Commission, provided in Decree 57, to draft enabling legislation, including amendments to or repeal of decrees, which may conflict with the provisions of the draft constitution, in particular those relating to human rights, trade union rights and the administration of justice. The motive behind this abrupt reversal of the Commission's mandate is a cause for alarm.

The Commission is understandably frustrated at having to work in this ever-changing scenario in terms of the task entrusted to it, and has said so publicly. This must not continue.


We call on the regime to stop the harassment and intimidation of the Commission, and the constant issuing of decrees which keep changing the process.

The Commission must be allowed the independence and integrity that is necessary for its task to be completed with credibility. We believe, as representatives of all major political parties, that the overwhelming majority of the people of Fiji fully support the Constitution Commission.

We urge the Commission to remain steadfast in maintaining its independence and integrity, and to continue to resist and reject attempts by the regime or anyone else to dictate to it.

We feel that the final test of the draft constitution will be its acceptance by the people irrespective of the reactions of the hand-picked Constituent Assembly, both in the eyes of our people and the members of the international community.


We re-iterate our stand for the process to be kept independent of the regime. And once again urge the President to take heed of our petition to him of 12 September 2012 and to set up a caretaker administration to oversee Fiji's return to democratic and constitutional rule.

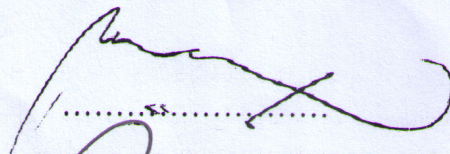
SDL  Jone Kubuabola
Member Executive Board

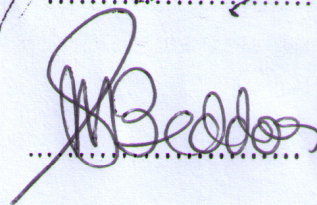
FLP Mahendra P. Chaudhry
Secretary-General/Leader

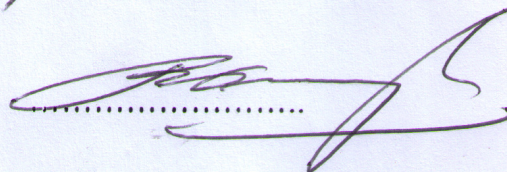
UPP Mick Beddoes
President

NFP Raman Pratap Singh
President


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