



FIJI TRADES UNION CONGRESS

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YOUR REF:

NATIONAL SECRETARY: Felix Anthony

OUR REF: PUB/01

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The Fiji Trades Union Congress is not surprised by the Attorney General's attempts to personalize issues in response to FTUC's press release of 9th March in regards to the announcement by the PM on the Constitution Review Process.

In his response the AG stated that I as National Secretary had called him and in some way advised him that the abrogation of the Constitution was something that had happened and that we ought to look forward. This was reported by Fiji TV on Saturday 10th March without the TV station seeking any response to the allegations from me. The allegations are false and misleading.

We can now see the first instance where the recent State Proceedings Amendment Decree 2012 is in action. The Decree offers absolute immunity to members of the current regime and the media to say or publish any remark by the current regime. The AG and the media can make any outrageous allegations on anyone without the 'alleged' having the right to respond. His reference to my position being in any way linked to the FNPF Board is mischievous and the smirk on his face while making such comments tells it all. There is absolutely no doubt that the AG will continue to make such allegations and personal attacks with the protection of his decrees to try and avoid dealing with the real issues.

The fact is that I as National Secretary was concerned about the abrogation of the Constitution which prompted me to make a call to him to enquire as to what was happening. I sought a meeting with him on the issue. I was granted an audience in his office at a later date and I

explicitly made it very clear to him that I was there in my capacity as National Secretary of FTUC and questioned the decision to abrogate the Constitution. I was assured by the AG in that meeting that the abrogation may be temporary to deal with the High Court decision that ruled the takeover of Government to be illegal and in any case he would ensure that a decree would soon be gazetted that would strengthen the Bill of Rights in the 1997 Constitution and would guarantee Human and Trade Union rights. I reported the outcome of this meeting to the National Council of FTUC held in Nadi the following week. I can have the entire National Council of FTUC sign an affidavit to support this. The AG, as we all know, did not keep his word.

The real issue currently is the constitution review process where the FTUC position is clear. The AG would do great service to the nation if only he can tell the nation when he will put into practice PM's "non-negotiable" list of issues which must be part of the Fifth Constitution report this country will see in less than 3 decades. This includes respect for equality, Good governance, accountability and transparency, social justice, elimination of discrimination & Independent Judiciary. All these can easily be done if the regime and the AG revoked the draconian decrees that have been imposed on the people of Fiji. The FTUC has publicized the implications of these decrees and, the world, including ILO, have condemned these decrees. The values and principles that the PM has espoused to in his announcement need to be put into deed and the AG is well placed to do just that. As an elected representative of workers, I can understand the desperation of an unelected AG attempting to reign in on his ill obtained authority and the threat the "non negotiable" issues would pose to him.

The AG's response therefore is no surprise. Let us deal with the real issues. The FTUC is prepared to be part of the solution and we firmly believe that it is now time to return the government of Fiji to its rightful owners, the people of Fiji.

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National Secretary

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