



FIJI TRADES UNION CONGRESS

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OUR REF: PUB/01

DATE: 06/11/12

FTUC RELEASE NO: 37-24/12

FTUC Calls on Regime to Stop Interference of Constitutional Process

In recent days, we have witnessed increased attacks on the role of the Constitution Review Commission and its Chairperson, Professor Yash Ghai by the Prime Minister. It is becoming apparent that the work of the Review Commission is being undermined.

Decree 64 of 2012 clearly interferes with the "terms of reference" of the Review Commission and in fact severely restricts the role of the Commission. Two important roles of the Commission that gave the review process some element of transparency have been removed. This includes the removal of a public consultation process on the draft report of the Commission and the requirement of Decree 58 to empower the Commission to review all existing laws that violate fundamental provisions of the Draft Constitution including the "non negotiable" provisions.

While the FTUC has had serious reservations on the process of the review, the more recent pronouncements by the Prime Minister and Decree No. 64 places the entire process in jeopardy. The attacks on the Commission and its Chairperson are unjustified and constitute blatant interference in the Commission's work. The FTUC deplors such development and call on the Government to demonstrate its sincerity and commitment by not interfering in the work of the Commission to ensure a report that fairly reflects the will of the people of Fiji. The report must reflect the true aspirations and will of the people as Decrees 57 and 58 mandate the Commission.

Of greater concern is the fact that Decree 58 empowers the Prime Minister to appoint a "Constituent Assembly". Having experienced and witnessed the behaviour of the Government in the review process and the Commission being treated with contempt, it is now becoming clear that the Assembly will simply be a rubber stamp, no more, no less. Yet we have witnessed how much faith has been placed by the International Community in this process and more so because the process was headed by Professor Ghai who is well regarded internationally. The PM has told Professor Ghai that he can decide to do whatever he wants if he is unhappy with Government.

The FTUC reminds Government to honour its commitment to the International Community on a new Constitution that would respect fundamental rights and one that would reflect the aspirations of the people. We call on the Government to repeal Decree 64 immediately and allow the Commission to perform its work unhindered. Any further instability created by the regime would invite more sanctions and cause grave hardship to the people of Fiji who are already suffering.

A more responsible approach by Government is essential and the people of Fiji have a right to expect just that.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Felix Anthony', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Felix Anthony
National Secretary

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