



FIJI TRADES UNION CONGRESS

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FTUC CALL FOR DEMOCRACY

FTUC calls for immediate free and fair elections under the 1997 Constitution and return to democracy.

There is a general consensus amongst the people from all walks of life in this nation that Fiji must return immediately to democratic rule. Fiji cannot progress or develop without democracy. This is evident with the very low investment, high unemployment, ever rising inflation giving rise to unprecedented poverty in Fiji. The inflation rate in our calculation is hovering around 12%-15% and the cost of Consumer items have risen to 55%-60% within a year. The medical care in hospitals are pathetic due to lack of funds. Even the stationery cannot be bought since funds are not available. However, the bigger issue is that technical support services like laboratory and pharmacies in major hospitals lack basic items to function properly.

The regime's plan for Elections and return to democratic rule in 2014 is not credible, not sustainable and therefore not in the best interest of Fiji. Now that the Regime is bloating with a recent suspect survey claiming 65% support amongst the citizens, there is no reason why it should not call elections immediately and seek the mandate of the people to continue doing what it is perceiving to do.

The fact is that junta has lost the trust and confidence of the people of Fiji and therefore cannot and should not embark on a process and exercise of amending the Constitution or the electoral system prior to the next election. An essential role of the 1997 Constitution was to establish and consolidate a national consensus on how Fiji should be governed. It succeeded in its aim and helped to put aside the divisions and the bitterness of 1987 Coups and subsequent policies of discrimination. The 1997 Constitution provided a basis under which all of Fiji's Communities had lived together peacefully under a system of government and governance. The Constitution must be reinstated as a first priority as its represents a consensus of all the communities in Fiji.

We, therefore, must oppose any attempt by an illegitimate regime to change the constitution or the electoral process.

The regime needs to now get a clear mandate from the people of Fiji to embark on this process. We therefore call for an immediate return to democracy and if the junta has faith in itself and the "Loury Report", it should seek the mandate of the people.

Any changes to the 1997 Constitution must involve the full democratic process including consultation without fear and intimidation with the people of Fiji.

If this junta is sincere and believes that it is doing the right thing for Fiji then it should have no hesitation in going to the people and seeking the mandate from the people of Fiji. They should not have any difficulty in getting the mandate from the people, if indeed the people believe that they are doing the right thing. The only reason that we believe that this regime will not seek the mandate of the people is because they either have ulterior motives or lack confidence in themselves.

We note that at the eve of the Pacific Island Forum Minister's meeting in Auckland the regime issued a statement that voter registration for the 2014 election will begin in January next year. This is another ploy to bamboozle the public. There is not even a shred of evidence which shows that the regime is serious about holding election any time soon apart from misleading statements from various arms of the junta. People do not believe any more the propaganda put out for the public consumption. There is absolutely no preparatory work being done by the elections office and registration cannot commence unless the Constitution is in place which would include the electoral process.

We the trade unions are democratic and legitimate organizations of workers who have the mandate to speak on their behalf.

We are, therefore, calling on the Regime to enter into immediate inclusive dialogue with all the political parties and trade unions to enable Fiji's return to democracy as soon as possible.

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National Secretary.

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