



PRESS RELEASE (No. 1 of 2018)

NO PROSECUTIONS FOR VOICING POLITICAL DISSENT IN FIJI

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS, MR CHRISTOPHER PRYDE

In an article published on the Radio New Zealand (RNZ) website on 23 December 2017 entitled “2017 in Pacific Politics: A turbulent ride to stability,” the writers stated that MPs in Fiji risk being charged with sedition for voicing dissent.

The article under the subheading ‘Fiji’ reads “Fiji First will fancy its chances of returning to power at next year's general election, but the opposition forces are steadily gaining momentum, despite MPs risking being charged with sedition for voicing dissent.”

This statement is factually incorrect and requires correction and clarification.

No one in Fiji risks being charged with sedition for voicing dissent. No one in Fiji has been charged with sedition for voicing dissent.

This is not the first time that RNZ and other media organisations have stated or implied that Fiji’s criminal laws on sedition are being used to stifle legitimate political dissent and debate.

It is vitally important, especially in an election year, that all political parties, politicians and participants in the political process understand that no criminal proceedings will be instituted against any individual or organisation for engaging in legitimate political discussion. A decision as to whether a breach of the law has been made is carefully analyzed by lawyers in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions with full regard to the criminal law and the rights and freedoms guaranteed to all people under the Fijian Constitution. A final decision on whether a charge will be laid in the courts is made by the Director of Public Prosecutions and no one else.

As Director of Public Prosecutions, I can state assuredly that no person or organisation will be prosecuted merely for voicing political dissent or for engaging in robust political debate or for expressing legitimate criticisms of the government, all of which are hallmarks of a constitutional democracy.

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4 January 2018