



Public Services International
Internationale des Services Publics
Internacional de Servicios Públicos
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Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama
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Dear Commodore Bainimarama,

**PSI protests against the continued assault of Fiji's military regime
on democratic and trade union rights**

Public Services International (PSI) joins the global unions, including ITUC, to condemn the Fiji political party decree (Decree 4 of 2013), issued on 15th January 2013.

This decree is the most recent affront to democratic principles and trade union rights. The military regime has also discarded a new draft constitution, which was the product of a popular consultative process. The purpose of this new decree is clear – to eliminate existing opposition political parties and to prevent new ones from being registered.

Most troubling, Article 14 of the decree excludes all public officers from applying for, being a member of, or holding office in a political party. Article 14.2(d) defines “public officer” to include any elected or appointed trade union officer. It is no coincidence that the decree was issued just days after the Fiji Trades Union Congress (FTUC) held a special delegates’ meeting to launch a new opposition political party which would include trade unions. Incredibly, under Article 14.1(c), a trade union official cannot even express support for a political party. If a trade union leader does become an applicant for or member or officer of a party, they will be deemed as having resigned from their trade union office. Anyone defying this decree faces a \$50,000 fine, five years imprisonment or both.

PSI notes that Fiji's regime is once again attempting to silence the largest civil society organization and opposition force in the country – the trade union movement. The international community needs to recognize that the promise of elections in 2014 will be meaningless if all Fijian citizens cannot fully participate in the political process. This decree should remove any doubt that the regime is seeking to have itself elected in 2014 by any and all means necessary.

The decree also appears to seek to eliminate many existing parties. Parties will have less than one month from the issuance of the decree to demonstrate a minimum membership of 5,000 members (up from 180), which must come from all four divisions of the country, and must pay a \$5,005 fee.

The decree even regulates the length of the name and prohibits any party's name in the indigenous language of the country. Those parties that do not comply will have all of their assets seized by the regime. If they continue to act as a political party despite failing to meet the new criteria, party officials will face a \$50,000 fine, five years imprisonment or both.

This decree clearly violates principles of freedom of association by prohibiting unions from engaging in political activities for the promotion of their trade union objectives. All individuals and groups that wish to form a political party should be able to do so, based on the principle of equal treatment before the law.

PSI then urges the Fijian government to respect the principle of freedom of association, and to work constructively with unions to build mature industrial relations, which can only benefit the people and economy of Fiji.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rosa Pavanelli', with a stylized, cursive script.

Rosa PAVANELLI
PSI General Secretary