



## FIJI TRADES UNION CONGRESS

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### **FTUC RELEASE NO: 45-03/13**

#### **Denial of Political Rights to Workers**

The Regime in imposing its latest Decree No. 4 of 2013 denying its citizens political rights is a new high for the dictatorship that currently exists in Fiji. The regime cannot be at all serious on its claim to achieve “true democracy” while it denies its people a political voice and freedom of speech and association. Ironically, the self-appointed Prime Minister of Fiji assumed the Chair of G77 at the United Nations, seated alongside the Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-Moon while at home on the same day his regime once again thrashed the UN Declaration of Human Rights. The Decree is further blatant breach of ILO Core Convention on Freedom of Association. Another UN Organisation that this Regime has failed to honor its commitment to.

It is noteworthy that the regime imposes these draconian decrees in the name of transparency and accountability while it exempts itself from these very standards. This brings into question their sincerity and motive. If the Regime wishes to be credible it actually must apply the same standards of transparency and accountability to its own administration.

Decree No. 4 of 2013 totally denies all Trade Unionists either elected or appointed, any political rights to be a member of a political party, to hold office of a political party, to engage in any political activity or to even indicate support for any political party. This is a grave injustice and breach of human and workers’ rights. This is tantamount to telling workers of this country that they cannot have a political voice of their own and a direct attack on democracy. The regime has been paying lip service to the so called road to democracy. This decree is about controlling all political activity and parties and does little to promote true democracy.

The Decree dictates that any Unionist or public officer who becomes a member of a political party must resign or will be deemed to have resigned in accordance with section 14(4) and (5).

An unelected regime has absolutely no right to tell elected Trade Unionists to resign if they wish to be part of a political movement. The Workers of Fiji elect their leaders, fund their unions and determine issues that they need addressed. The workers of Fiji have seen their rights not only erode but totally denied in many areas and have had enough. This is precisely why they have decided to form a political movement that would champion their cause and democracy. Trade Unions are democratic institutions and can only operate fully to their potential in a democracy.

The FTUC maintains that workers in Fiji must have the right to choose their leaders, form their own organisations to further their interests including political, without any interference from the state. The workers' interests and their rights must be respected. It is legitimate. Anything that impacts workers is Trade Union Business. This is fundamentally why Trade Unions exist all over the world. Here we have a dictatorship that attempts to disenfranchise the workers and their Unions simply because it fears that its power may be slipping.

The FTUC strongly condemns these attempts and calls on the regime to reconsider its International obligations through membership of the UN, ILO and various other Organisations to respect Fundamental Human Rights and also their commitments to the people of Fiji and the International Community. The promise of a transparent and inclusive process to free and fair elections to achieve true democracy which is sustainable is now questionable. This Decree once again puts Fiji under the International spotlight for the wrong reasons and brings disrepute.

The FTUC remains committed to the workers' cause and will commence work on the formation of a political party that is truly multiracial and adheres to the core values of social justice and democracy. Wide consultations have been held and a vigorous process was adhered to, which culminated in the decision to form a political party at the Special Delegates Conference of the FTUC. The will of the people must remain paramount.



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