

United Front for a Democratic Fiji

A PETITION OF THE PEOPLE

We the people of the Fiji Islands declare that we seek a Constitution that frees us from fear, oppression and injustice and helps to transform our homeland once again into a symbol of hope for the world.

We declare that:

- We represent the sovereignty of the nation; we are the ultimate power and can only be legitimately governed with our freely given consent. The authority of the state must not be concentrated in the hands of the few, but must be widely shared nationally and locally in the true spirit of democracy;
- Parliament must always be subservient and accountable to us;
- The military must also be under the authority and control of Parliament and should have no place at all in the political life of the country; the power of our democracy should come from the ballot box;

We recall the events in our history that have shaped these islands, especially their settlement by the ancestors of the indigenous Fijian and Rotuman people, the later arrival of Pacific Islanders, Europeans, Indians and Chinese. From these migrations emerged the multiracial, multicultural and multi religious society of Fiji.

We acknowledge the richness, the diversity and the vibrancy of our society and dedicate ourselves to healing the wounds we have all inflicted on it. We must patiently encourage mutual trust, understanding and respect as the foundation for united nationhood and a shared identity. This cannot be imposed but must come from our hearts and minds.

We commit ourselves to securing social and economic justice and advancement and prosperity of all communities and full respect for their rights, freedoms, dignity and wider interests, reinforced by the rule of law.

We honor the social importance of the family.

AND NOW, WITH GOD AS OUR WITNESS, WE GIVE SUPPORT TO THIS PETITION OF THE PEOPLE TO EXPRESS

- 1. Our rejection of the Government's 2013 Draft constitution that does not provide the basis for our harmonious and democratic development as a nation.**
- 2. We have serious concerns over many of its provisions and omissions. Some of these are:**
 - The limitations it places on people's rights, including the right to life;
 - The dominant role of the Army;
 - The politicization of the Army and Police and the Public Service.
 - The concentration of powers in the hands of the Prime Minister and the Attorney General which erodes the principles of democracy;

United Front for a Democratic Fiji

- Issues connected with the Judiciary; in particular, the judicial appointments and removal of the two most senior members of the judiciary.
- The absence of specific and clear protection of land ownership and tenancy rights;
- The absence of indigenous and group rights, including those relating to important cultural institutions such as the Great Council of Chiefs and those of minority communities;
- The absence of adequate recognition and protection of the interests of women;
- The serious restrictions on union and workers' rights;
- The severe obstacles for making necessary amendments to the Constitution;
- The absence of any provisions for a Caretaker Government to independently manage the transition from the current dictatorship to democracy;
- The inclusion of comprehensive immunity for offences connected with the coup of 2006 and other events, against the wishes of the people.

We strongly assert that the current consultation process for the Government's 2013 Draft Constitution is inadequate and lacking in independence. We also ask how we the people can fully study the Draft when the document is presented to us only in English, rather than in our own languages.

We are entitled to know, in the interest of openness and accountability, who in the regime drafted the document?

3. **We now call for the 2012 People's Draft, to be submitted to the full scrutiny of a fully representative Constituent Assembly to be appointed by an Independent and impartial person or entity. The 2012 People's Draft reflected the views, thoughts and aspirations of a very wide cross-section of our society, based on over 7000 submissions and 110 public hearings. More than 1000 submissions were made on behalf of community groups, civil society organizations, political parties, businesses, faith-based organizations, trade unions and other entities.**
4. **We call for the establishment of a Truth & Reconciliation Commission to give the people of Fiji a forum in which to heal our national wounds and ailments of the past and help us to move forward together.**
5. **Following the approval, with amendments, of the 2012 People's draft by the Constituent Assembly, it must be submitted to us, the people of Fiji, through a national referendum, supervised by the International Community.**
6. **Through this Petition, we the people, express our lack of confidence in this unelected regime, and in particular their continuing suppression of our workers rights, media freedom and their failure to make public the reports of the Auditor General and the total absence of any transparency and accountability to the people.**

GOD BLESS FIJI

