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MEDIA RELEASE

Independent Parliamentary Committee needed to investigate cases of police brutality and breaches of human rights

The National Federation Party will move a Motion in Parliament during its next sitting from March 20-24 calling for the establishment of a Special Committee of Parliament to independently investigate cases of alleged police brutality and barbaric breaches of human rights because the current procedures for investigation is thoroughly compromised.

Such a Special Committee will be an independent body with no links whatsoever to either the Fiji Police Force or the victims of alleged police brutality and violations of their rights.

This is absolutely vital in the absence of an Ombudsman. Previously an Ombudsman was a retired judge and under the 1997 Constitution, the Ombudsman was also Chairperson of Fiji Human Rights Commission.

Under Standing Order 129 of Parliament, a Special Committee can be established by resolution of Parliament and it has the same powers as that of other parliamentary standing committees where it can conduct its hearings in public, summon people to give evidence and compel the production of such evidence.

This even includes summoning a Minister as per Section 91(3) of the Constitution. A Special Committee has the powers of a High Court as prescribed in Section 112 of the Standing Orders of Parliament.

It has become painfully evident that victims who have been either tortured, abused or had their fundamental rights breached have lost faith in the current process of investigation involving the Internal Affairs Unit of the Force as well as the Human Rights and Anti Discrimination Commission.

We have received several complaints of alleged police brutality, ill treatment of citizens, suppression of their complaints and even allegations by family members of their relative being tortured to death while in police custody, as in the case of 19 year old teenager, Vikarant Chandra, last week.

A case where a 36 year old from Kulukulu, Sigatoka, was allegedly victimized and humiliated by police after a traffic accident in late August 2016, caused the victim severe mental trauma leading him to commit suicide in January. According to the victim's family and friends, before he died he would often state that he was a genuine victim of injustice.

Normally, as in the above two cases of the Sigatoka resident and the 19 year old teenager who died in police custody, there is an inquest to determine the cause of death if investigations prove inconclusive.

All correspondence should be addressed to the general secretary

Yet another incident case has been brought to our attention, where a female victim who was allegedly stripped naked in public view by police in January, is still crying for justice a month later. She suffered cruel and degrading treatment but the police response has been lackadaisical and has even gone to the extent of accusing the victim of manufacturing her sorry saga.

No amount of denial of the existence of alleged serious breaches of human rights and rubbishing findings of international human rights watchdogs can remove the tarnished image of this Government and the security forces until it is seen to be doing right and transparently so, by the people of this land.

The onus on this issue of recurring serious human rights violations by organs of the State is on the Government. It must show its sincerity as a measure of its worthiness of recent ratification to the UN Convention on Torture, and prove that to the nation that it is ready to be considered by the world as an upstanding candidate for the UN Human Rights Council seat.

Supporting a Motion to establish a Special Parliamentary Committee would be a good start.

Authorised by: -



Professor Biman Prasad
NFP Leader

Encl: Standing Order 129 of Parliament

129. Special Committees

(1) A special committee may be established by resolution of Parliament to carry out the assignment specified in the resolution.

(2) A special committee continues in existence until—

- . (a) it completes its assignment; or
- . (b) Parliament resolves to discharge the committee.

(3) Members of a special committee must be appointed as part of the resolution of Parliament that establishes the committee.

(4) A special committee has—

- . (a) the powers of a standing committee conferred by these Standing Orders; and
- . (b) any other powers specified in the resolution of Parliament that establishes the committee.