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MEDIA RELEASE

ASHWIN RAJ MUST BE DISMISSED FROM HIS POSITIONS: NFP

The National Federation Party has called for the immediate dismissal of Ashwin Raj in both his positions as Chair of the Media Industry and Development Authority (MIDA) and Director of the Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission (FHRADC), following his suggestions to stifle freedom of speech on national television.

Party Leader, Professor Biman Prasad, said that the suggestions on Sunday night 2nd April) by Mr Raj on FBCTV Current Affairs Show *For the Record*, where he urged the State to pursue the regulation of social media are shocking and must be condemned in the strongest terms.

“The NFP strongly condemns these suggestions to the State by Mr Raj, which we know are all being said under the pretext of “responsibility.”

“It is chilling, unconstitutional and could be easily wielded as an instrument to again stifle the voices of the people of Fiji.”

“What we find further disturbing are his pointed attacks on political parties and then the further justification of these attacks, to bring in regulation over social media.”

“The NFP sees this as a blatant attempt to stifle the voices of political parties in the lead-up to elections next year.”

“Fiji already has in place a heavily regulated media industry, with draconian laws, and penalties.”

“There is no need to introduce further laws to stifle civil liberties. There is instead a great need to repeal these laws.”

Professor Prasad added that citizens had taken to Mr Raj himself, their complaints on communal antagonism against FBCTV for the program *Wasea Basha*.

“However Mr Raj merely brushed these off as not meeting the “threshold for inciting communal discord.”

“It seems he has conveniently changed his mind on what such a “threshold” constitutes when this has concerned the State and its representatives”

All correspondence should be addressed to the general secretary

“We are also appalled with the false accusations and political commentary that have emerged from Mr Raj in defending the statement of Fiji’s Ambassador to Geneva, Nazhat Shameem at the 34th Session of the Human Rights Council.”

“His statement was based on an inaccurate lengthy version of the Ambassador’s statement, which the Fiji Mission in Geneva continued to have on its website and furthermore made some serious political commentary and opinion of what he thinks is true.”

“He continued to drive that agenda on Sunday night on FBCTV.”

“As the Director of a constitutionally independent commission, Mr Raj had cast inaccurate, political aspersions on opposition political parties, without checking the basic facts, including the true record of the speech.”

“The fact that a public servant in the Director of the FHRADC, has come into the political scene, falsely accusing opposition political parties of his own opinionated conclusion, contradicts the behaviour expected of public servants which explicitly demand political neutrality and impartiality.”

“They contravene the constitutional values and principles expected of public servants who should display high standards of behavior, including professional ethics and integrity.”

“I call on the Chairperson and members of the FHRADC who are constitutionally responsible for the promotion, protection, observation, of human rights, to take a proactive interest in the work of the commission and its officers, particularly its Director.”

“Mr Raj should be terminated from his positions to allow other more worthy, neutral and independent Fijians to apply for the position. His utterances and accusations are damning where he has crossed the line as a public servant acting as a mouthpiece for a political agenda.”



Professor Biman Prasad
NFP Leader