

URGENT ACTION

TORTURE AND DETENTION OF ACTIVISTS IN FIJI

Human rights and democracy activists in Fiji are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment in the context of an ongoing crackdown by the military in response to plans for a peaceful protest.

At least 10 politicians, trade unionists, government critics and other Fijians have been arbitrarily arrested and subjected to severe beatings and other forms of torture and ill-treatment in the last two weeks at the hands of the Fijian military, before being released. It is feared that more people will be arrested and subjected to torture and ill-treatment in the next few days as the military attempts to prevent plans for a peaceful protest demonstration against the government in Fiji's capital, Suva, on 4 March 2011.

On 26 February, at least two politicians were detained and beaten at the army barracks in Suva and released the next day. On the same day, seven young men from a settlement on the outskirts of Suva were also reportedly tortured and ill-treated by the military, because they had been discussing plans for a peaceful demonstration on 4 March. Some human rights activists and family members who went to ask for the release of the seven young men were threatened and beaten by soldiers at the army camp. The soldiers warned the young men that they will be killed if they spoke to anyone about their treatment at the camp.

On 25 February, Amnesty International reported on the torture and ill-treatment of Fijian politician **Sam Speight**, also known as Samisoni Tikoinasau, who was detained for three days. During that time no information regarding his detention and treatment was given to his family. Speight's detention and torture followed the recent arrests of a number of trade unionists and politicians who were also threatened and beaten by military officers at the Queen Elizabeth Barracks. They have subsequently been released, but there are continuing fears for their safety.

Amnesty International is gravely concerned for the safety of activists and government critics. No military officers have been officially investigated or charged over these beatings and neither the military nor the Ministry of Information answered any overseas media queries regarding these cases.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English or your own language:

- Calling for the Fijian authorities to stop the arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment of critics, activists and members of the public and allow people to gather together in a peaceful manner on 04 March 2011;
- Calling for the authorities to immediately suspend the Public Emergency Regulations and allow for peaceful assembly and freedom of expression;
- Calling for the authorities to immediately initiate an independent impartial investigation into the arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment of opposition politicians, government critics, trade unionists, and young people, and ensure that those military officers suspected of involvement in these acts, irrespective of rank, are brought to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 31 MARCH 2011 TO:

President of the Republic of the Fiji Islands
Ratu Epeli Nailatikau
Office of the President
Government House
Berkley Crescent
P.O. Box 2513, Government Buildings
Suva
Fax: +679 3301 645
Salutation: Your Excellency

Prime Minister & Commander of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces
Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama
Prime Minister's Office
Government Buildings
Fax: +679 3306 034
Email: pmsoffice@connect.com.fj
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

And copies to:
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Ratu Inoke Kubuabola
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PO Box 2220,
Government Buildings, Suva, Fiji
Fax: +679 3301 741
Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In April 2009, the President of Fiji, President Ratu Iloilo, abolished the Constitution, sacked the judiciary and declared a state of emergency using the Public Emergency Regulations (PER). The PER greatly restricts freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and the Fijian government continues to use it as a tool of repression. Ongoing censorship of the media and threats, intimidation and attacks against government critics continue to evoke a climate of fear in Fiji. Amnesty International has reported of ongoing human rights violations in Fiji since the military coup d'etat in 2006 and a prevailing culture of impunity amongst members of the security forces.

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