



Pacific Media Watch

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IFJ CONDEMNS HARASSMENT OF FIJI MEDIA

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SYDNEY (*IFJ/Pacific Media Watch*): The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) condemns continuing intimidation and interference in Fiji's independent media after police issued search warrants against the *Fiji Times* and Fiji TV on March 10.

Police were reportedly looking for correspondence from international organisations and political mediators regarding the political situation in Fiji. The correspondence was the basis of news reports by both media outlets earlier in the week.

The editor-in-chief of the *Fiji Times*, Netani Rika, was taken to Suva's central police station on March 10 and questioned about a letter published in the Times earlier this week, according to local media reports.

The letter was from the United Nations and the Commonwealth communicating their support for a political dialogue forum on March 13 to discuss Fiji's return to democratic rule.

On the same day, police searched the office of Fiji TV, reportedly looking for a letter from political mediators Sitiveni Halapua and Robin Nair seeking a meeting with interim Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama.

Nair and Halapua were appointed last year to prepare the terms of reference for this week's political forum, which is to be facilitated by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the UN. Nair was sacked from the role in January when the interim government said he had compromised his position by making statements to the media.

Meanwhile, in the early hours of March 10, Rika's company car was

smashed by vandals.

"The search warrants and questioning of Rika appear to be part of a systematic campaign of intimidation against Fiji's media," IFJ Asia-Pacific director Jacqueline Park said.

"The IFJ questions why the interim military government is so eager to ensure people in Fiji are denied information when the government claims to protect freedom of the press."

Fiji's interim government, established after a military coup led by Bainimarama in 2006, promised more than 12 months ago to ensure "media freedom is secured and guaranteed" as a key aspect of Fiji's return to political and democratic stability.

However, in the past year the government has expelled three editors or publishers from the country and launched contempt cases against two media outlets, among other anti-media actions.

"Efforts to repress public discussion on matters of public importance in Fiji are an attack on press freedom and promote a climate of fear," Park said.

"Bainimarama must direct authorities under his control to end these continuing attempts to deny information to Fiji's people."

*For further information contact IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919.
The IFJ represents over 600,000 journalists in 120 countries worldwide.*

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School of Communication Studies | AUT University | Private Bag 92006 | Auckland 1142 | Aotearoa/New Zealand
pacific.mediawatch@aut.ac.nz www.pacmediawatch.aut.ac.nz | creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/nz/

