



JOINT CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT

Rushed constitutional process risks a self-coup and must be stopped

We, the undersigned civil society organisations, express our grave concern at the reported plan to bring a new Constitution into force by 24 December 2026, only weeks before Fiji must proceed to the next general election.

We view this timeline as dangerous, unnecessary and constitutionally reckless. If pursued in a manner that delays the next election, extends the life of the current Parliament, or allows the Executive to govern beyond the life of an elected legislature, it would amount in substance to an autogolpe, or self-coup.

A self-coup occurs when a government uses legal, parliamentary or institutional mechanisms to entrench itself in power, weaken democratic limits, or continue governing without a mandate from the people. Fiji must not be taken down that path.

The democratic authority of Parliament is not indefinite. It is derived from the people through a general election and is limited by time. Once that mandate approaches expiry, the constitutional priority must be clear: the people must be allowed to elect a new Parliament on time.

We are deeply concerned that bringing a new Constitution into force at the end of December 2026 may make the timely conduct of the next general election legally and administratively impossible, particularly if the proposed Constitution changes the electoral system, electoral law, nomination requirements, party rules, constituency arrangements, or the machinery for conducting elections.

No Government has the moral, legal or democratic authority to use constitutional reform to create uncertainty around an election that is constitutionally due. Constitutional reform cannot be used to defeat democracy itself.

Fiji has endured too many periods of unconstitutional and undemocratic rule. The country has spent the last 12 years rebuilding democratic government. The peaceful transfer of power following the 2022 general election was a historic achievement, and one of the most important democratic milestones in Fiji's modern history. It proved that political power in Fiji can change through the ballot box.

It is therefore unthinkable that Fiji could now be pushed back towards undemocratic rule through a rushed constitutional timetable for which there is no constitutional necessity, no legal urgency and no democratic justification.

We are not opposed to constitutional review. The people of Fiji have the right to debate constitutional reform through a process that is open, inclusive, transparent and genuinely democratic. But no constitutional process can be legitimate if it places the next general election at risk.

We therefore call on the Government to immediately and publicly guarantee that:

1. The next general election will be held within the constitutionally required timeframe.
2. The constitutional review process will not delay the next election by even a single day.
3. The life of the current Parliament will not be extended, directly or indirectly.
4. No constitutional or electoral-system change will take effect before the next general election unless the Electoral Commission and the Supervisor of Elections publicly certify that the election can still be conducted lawfully, credibly and on time.
5. If any major change to the electoral system is proposed, it must be subject to a clear transitional provision stating that the next general election will proceed under the existing electoral framework.
6. The people of Fiji will be given adequate time, clear information and a meaningful opportunity to consider any proposed Constitution before any referendum is held.

We further call on Members of Parliament, across party lines, to reject any constitutional timetable that risks taking Fiji beyond the democratic life of the current Parliament. No MP should support any process that creates even the possibility of delayed elections or rule without a current mandate.

We also call on Fiji's development partners, regional institutions and diplomatic missions to closely monitor this process and to make clear that the timely conduct of Fiji's next general election is a non-negotiable democratic requirement.

Fiji's Constitution belongs to the people. It must not be rewritten in a manner that compromises the people's right to choose their government on time.

Signed:

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Fiji Women's Rights Movement
Fiji Council of Social Services
Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding
Social Empowerment and Education Programme
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