

FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT

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"ILLEGAL APPOINTMENTS COMPROMISE JUDICIARY," SAYS FWRM

THE RECENT appointments to Fiji's highest court are illegal and further compromise the independence of the judiciary, says the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. The interim regime announced the new appointments, which include two women judges, at the 2008 opening of the Fiji Court of Appeal last Tuesday. The gender of the appointees is an irrelevant factor given the circumstances in which they were appointed, said FWRM. The rule of law cannot be sacrificed, even for a false sense of gender equality.

"These latest judicial appointments by the military-headed regime further undermine the rule of law in our country. We are on seriously shaky ground when the interim regime is hand-picking the judges for the Court that may ultimately decide on the illegality of their government takeover," said FWRM Executive Director, Virisila Buadromo.

"We reiterate what the Fiji Law Society has pointed out; that all appointments to the judiciary after the military coup on 5th December, 2006 are unlawful."

The independence of the judiciary was further thrown into doubt after new appointee Justice Jocelyn Scutt publicly supported the controversial Fiji Human Rights Commission report on the 2001 general elections.

"Such comments lead the public to lose faith in the impartiality of the judiciary - which is a very serious threat to the rule of law," Buadromo said.

“The rule of law is a vitally important a pillar of democracy – without it we cannot hope to live in a peaceful, democratic society where we can all have a say in the decisions that affect our lives.”

FWRM is a multi-ethnic and multicultural NGO committed to removing discrimination against women. By means of core programmes, as well as innovative approaches, the FWRM practice promotes democracy, good governance, feminism and human rights. It strives to empower, unite and provide leadership opportunities for women in Fiji, especially for emerging young leaders.

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The Fiji Women's Rights Movement is a multiethnic and multicultural non-governmental organisation committed to removing discrimination against women through institutional reform and attitudinal change. Our vision is for the women of Fiji to be free from all forms of discrimination, have equal access to opportunities and to live in a healthy environment where the principles of feminism, democracy, good governance, multiculturalism and human rights prevail.

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