

20th January 2009

Transparency International

Fiji

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## Transparency International Disappointed by Reinstatement of Kean

### HOW DOES THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT DEFINE CORRUPTION?

Transparency International Fiji joins a long list of other organisations in condemning the reinstatement of Navy Commander Francis Kean.

The Interim Prime Minister's decision to reinstate Commander Kean to his former position has yet to be properly explained to the people of Fiji. The Interim Government must first convince its own senior civil servants and appointment authorities how exactly it followed accepted principles of good governance.

This case was an ideal opportunity for the Interim Government to exercise wisdom and integrity, given Commander Kean's relationship to the Interim Prime Minister and Minister of Public Service, Commodore Frank Bainimarama. Disciplinary requirements in the public service for serious misconduct, including serious criminal offences, are well known and in the past have been pursued vigorously. However, Transparency International Fiji is distressed about the uneven manner in which such cases have been handled.

Commander Kean's position is a significant leadership position within a disciplined public service responsible for the country's security. The Interim Government must employ transparent practices to ensure the greatest integrity in the appointment process and in the person concerned. Transparency International Fiji fails to see how anyone charged with a violent crime such as manslaughter should be allowed to resume a leadership role in which he is remunerated from public money without a significant 'conversation' taking place in the public. Public confidence requires that Fiji's leaders be self-disciplined at all times; above suspicion and above reproach.

The fact that Commander Kean, who was convicted of manslaughter in October 2007, continued to receive his full salary during his 18 month sentence is a clear abuse of public funds. That his reinstatement could be justified because of the considerable amount of training and experience afforded Mr. Kean is intolerable. Surely this is an insult to the other senior officers in the Naval Division who too have received extensive training and experience as well as public servants who have been terminated for convictions with sentences beyond 12 months.

The Interim Government must be accountable for their actions and explain the reasons behind Commander Kean's reappointment instead of accusing the public of 'politicising' the issue. In a just and open society, the public should have the opportunity to scrutinize the government's decisions. Transparency International Fiji views this as clear case of nepotism and corruption of the highest level.

These facts beg the question, how does the Interim Government - which staged the Coup to clean up the country of corruption - itself define corruption?

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**MEDIA RELEASE**  
 **2009**

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