



7 March 2011

The Honorable Sato Kilman
Prime Minister
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Government of Vanuatu
Port Vila, Vanuatu

Your Excellency:

With respect, we want to convey how deeply disturbed and saddened we are here at Pasifika Media Association (PasiMA) by what we believe are unjustified acts of violence that a Minister of your government, Mr. Harry Iauko, and others under his instructions, have perpetrated against the publisher of the *Vanuatu Daily Post*, Marc Neil-Jones, and members of his staff.

We understand that Mr. Iauko was angry with a story published in the *Post* about criticisms leveled against him by Marie Noelle Patterson of Transparency International, so he went to the *Post*'s office with his people and assaulted the publisher by strangling him around the neck and yanked tufts of hair from his head, among other acts of violence, which we find most shocking and shameful.

Mr. Prime Minister, we are aware that you are in the precarious position of presiding over a government with a slender majority in Parliament at the moment, and that you might be worried that dealing harshly with Mr. Iauko – which he rightly deserves – would see that majority becoming more slender still.

However, we also want to remind you that as the political leader of your country, you are just as responsible to the welfare of your countrymen and women as you are to the name of your country, VANUATU, that it does not remain smeared by the callous behaviour of just one man who happens to be an expendable member of your Cabinet.

We urge you therefore, Sir, to ensure that the course of justice in this case is allowed to prevail, so that Mr. Iauko and those who allegedly assaulted the publisher of the *Post* and his staff, should have their day in court and be made to answer to the rule of law of the land. Only then shall your people's respect of your leadership become strengthened, and their support of your government decidedly assured.

Mr. Prime Minister, we want to assure you that PasiMA is dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights and basic freedoms in the Pacific region and around the world. We also want you to know we are totally committed to upholding the principles of Democracy such as freedom of expression and the press, as well as the free flow of information and the public's right to know.

We therefore believe that what Mr. Iauko and his people have done was a complete infringement of these rights and these freedoms, and that the perpetrators of this violence should therefore be severely censured.

Sir, PasiMA urges you and your government to do what you know is right, bearing in mind that freedom of speech is guaranteed by your constitution simply because it is so important to the health of your country and your people.

We respectfully therefore ask that legal restraint from entering the offices of the *Daily Post* and its Publisher be instituted against Mr. Iauko and his people, and ask that they be charged with alleged assault. This should be done forthwith, since the *Post's* survival is vital to the public interest in Vanuatu.

We respectfully await your response.

Sincerely yours.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Savea Sano Malifa', written in a cursive style.

Savea Sano Malifa,

Chairman, Pasifika Media Association (PasiMA)