

FIJI



Fiji is one of the newest States parties to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT).¹ At the CTI's regional event for Pacific States on ratification and implementation of UNCAT, held in Fiji in October 2016, Fiji's Prime Minister, Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, explained the country's decision to ratify the Convention:

“ We do not tolerate human rights abuses of any kind. They are legally and morally unacceptable. And we are determined to bring the perpetrators of such abuses to justice.”

Acknowledging past cultural practices that promoted violence, as well as abuses during times of unrest, the Prime Minister emphasised that “Whatever may have occurred in the past, we have drawn a line under such behaviour.”

Fiji's positive constitutional framework

Like many other Pacific countries, Fiji has a robust constitutional framework that prohibits torture and cruel and degrading treatment and protects the rights of arrested and detained persons. Fiji's Constitution also provides that international law is among the sources of interpretation of the constitutional Bill of Rights, which has helpfully supported Fiji's implementation of the UN Convention.

Fiji takes action towards implementation

Fiji sees UNCAT as a mechanism to support domestic reforms. Through a process of education and deterrence, Fiji has taken concrete action to implement the Convention. With the support of the United Kingdom, UNDP and the APT, Fiji has been able to review the safeguards available to suspects held in police custody and in turn, will trial the digital recording of police interviews under caution. In other countries, digital recording has had the dual effects of preventing abuse of

“States parties in focus” is a series of CTI blogs, prepared by the CTI Secretariat, with a view to sharing inspiration and experiences with other States that are considering ratifying the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) and/or its Optional Protocol (OPCAT).

suspects, and at the same time, protecting police against false allegations of torture. It is also an easy way to preserve the evidence of oral testimony. It is one of a number of important safeguards that help prevent incidents of torture. Fiji has further opened investigations into a number of cases of abuse.

Fiji's Attorney-General, Mr. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, has noted the positive benefits of ratification, such as opening up avenues for national discussions on the possibility of reviewing police and corrections services manuals and upgrading prison facilities; as well as the possibility of receiving assistance from and engaging in bilateral and multilateral cooperation with various State parties to UNCAT and organisations such as the APT and CTI.

Fostering regional goodwill

For Fiji's Prime Minister, regional ratification would “send (...) a powerful signal from the region to the rest of the world about the commitment to human rights and human dignity”. He offered his country's assistance to Fiji's neighbours with their own ratification processes.

For the CTI and our partners, Fiji stands as a positive example of ratification followed by early action to implement the Convention.

In acknowledging also the ratifications of Nauru and Vanuatu, the CTI is looking forward to supporting other Pacific States to ratify the Convention.

For States interested in the support of CTI, please contact info@cti2024.org.

CTI Secretariat
April 2017

¹ Fiji ratified UNCAT in March 2016. Fiji entered some reservations to UNCAT upon ratification, although the country is working towards their removal.