



# Association of Caribbean Mediaworkers

Unit 1, Upper Level, Elan Place, 137 Eastern Main Rd,  
St. Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago

T: 1 (868) 296-8009

E: [acmmail@gmail.com](mailto:acmmail@gmail.com)

W: [www.acmediaworkers.com](http://www.acmediaworkers.com)

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Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) Secretariat  
Level 2, 46 Gordon Street, Damodar Centre  
Private Mail Bag, Suva, FIJI ISLANDS  
Phone: + (679) 3303 623, Fax: + (679) 3317 055  
Email: [pina@connect.com.fj](mailto:pina@connect.com.fj), Web: [www.pina.com.fj](http://www.pina.com.fj)

## **PINA MEDIA STATEMENT ON WORLD MEDIA FREEDOM DAY, 03 May 2009**

As the world celebrates Media Freedom Day, we in the Pacific are thinking of our colleagues in Fiji who have nothing to celebrate because their freedoms have been forcefully curtailed by the ruling government.

Media practitioners in Fiji are restricted from reporting negative or 'inciteful' stories against the caretaker government of Commodore Frank Bainimarama. A 30-day Public Emergency Regulation (PER) is in place to control everything that is published and broadcast.

"We salute the bravery of our media colleagues in Fiji, who despite the controlled environment that they operate in, continue to carry out their duty with resolute determination," said Joseph Ealedona, the President of the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA).

"We plead with the caretaker government in Fiji to give journalists the freedom to practice their profession without fear. They must be able to move freely to collect facts and views, to disseminate news, to demand accountability from those in office, and to protect their sources.

"We call on members of the Pacific Islands Forum to apply pressure on Fiji to restore media freedom and remove the Public Emergency Regulation, now in force for 23 days.

According to UNESCO, one of the underlying themes of this year's World Media Freedom Day is the potential for the media to foster dialogue, mutual understanding and reconciliation.



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“In this case, PINA would like to dialogue with the Fijian Government to bring about understanding of the role the media plays in Fiji’s move towards democratic processes.

Even though PINA, through its news agency, PACNEWS has been subjected to provisions of the Public Emergency Regulation, the organisation remains optimistic that good sense will prevail and the PER will be revoked at its expiry on 10 May.

In other Pacific Island Countries, where media freedom is alive and observed, we call on our members to dialogue with their governments to enhance the good working relationship that exists.

“We plead with all our national association members to begin dialogue with their respective governments to press Fiji to relax its media restrictions and allow free flow of information.”

Every year, World Media Freedom Day celebrates the fundamental principles of press freedom, to evaluate press freedom around the world, to defend the media from attacks on their independence and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession.

03 May was proclaimed World Media Freedom Day the UN General Assembly in 1993 following a recommendation adopted at the twenty-sixth session of UNESCO's General Conference in 1991...ENDS

For further information, contact PINA President, Joseph Ealedona, Tel: (675) 6950418