



MEDIA STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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France sabotages Kanaky New Caledonia Decolonisation Process under Macron leadership

The Pacific Regional Non-Governmental Organisations (PRNGOs) Alliance reaffirm its solidarity with the indigenous peoples of Kanaky New Caledonia to expose ongoing efforts by the French Government to deny their right to self-determination and derail a decolonisation process painstakingly pursued in this Pacific Island territory for the last 30 years.

France, especially under the Macron Government, as the colonial power administering this United Nations (UN) sanctioned process of decolonisation, has repeatedly shown that it cannot remain a neutral party to the Noumea Accords (1998) designed specifically to hand sovereignty back to the people of Kanaky New Caledonia and end French colonial rule.

In recent months, the Macron Government forced through proposed constitutional amendments, aimed at changing voting eligibility rules for local elections in the French territory. These eligibility provisions have been preserved and protected under the Accords as a safeguard for indigenous peoples against demographic changes that could make them a minority in their own land and block the path to freedom.

The electoral amendments have already been passed by the French Senate in early April and will be voted on in Parliament on May 13th, 2024.

The Macron Government has, in a parallel move, also managed to defer local elections, initially scheduled for mid-May, to mid-December at the latest, to allow voting under new provisions that would favour pro-French parties.

In 2021, President Macron unilaterally called for the third independence referendum to be held in December, 2021, amidst the turmoil of a COVID19 outbreak that heavily affected the ability of indigenous communities to organise and participate. Only 43.87 percent of the 184,364 registered voters exercised their right to vote.

Express reservations and requests by Kanak leaders and representatives for a later date were ignored, casting serious doubt on genuine representation and participation.

Consequently, a Pacific Islands Forum Mission sent to observe proceedings concluded in its report that “The self-determination referendum that took place 12 December 2021 did so with the non-participation of the overwhelming majority of the indigenous people of New Caledonia. The result of the referendum is an inaccurate representation of the will of registered voters...”

In all of these actions, the French government has shown no interest at all in respecting the Noumea Accords nor in granting the Kanaky people their most fundamental rights, particularly the right to be free.

On the contrary, Macron’s allies and pro-French voices claim that these initiatives by the French government are in fact more consistent with democratic principles and the rule of law. In recent weeks, the aspirations of the Kanaky people for self-determination have been mischaracterised as being ethno-nationalistic, akin to the ‘far-right’, and racist.

Should the vote on May 13th, 2024 to remove electoral roll restrictions succeed, this will be seen as a direct move by a coloniser to maintain the status quo of colonialism and a direct attack on the principle of the right to self-determination enshrined in the UN Charter and its Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

The evil of colonialism can continue unchecked in this manner, and in this 21st Century is not only an insult to the Pacific Region but to the international system.

The Pacific is not distracted by French false narratives. The Kanak, as people, are the rightful inhabitants of what is present day New Caledonia still under enduring French colonial rule.

We remind the French President, Emmanuel Macron, and the French government that decolonising its territories is an obligation under the international legal norms and is France’s responsibility to Kanaky New Caledonia under the Noumea Accords.

The Kanak people and New Caledonia’s destiny should not be decided in Europe, they are Pacific people who are rightfully asking for their freedom.

We, therefore strongly support calls for self-determination and decolonisation by the Kanaky people as well as their calls for:

- President Macron to withdraw the constitutional reforms on electoral roll provisions protecting the rights of the indigenous people of Kanaky;
- France to send a neutral high-level mission to resume dialogue between pro-independence parties and local anti-independence groups towards a new political agreement.
- The Melanesian Spearhead Group and the Pacific Islands Forum to support all efforts for the resumption of peaceful negotiations amongst parties to the Noumea Accord for a new political agreement and the overarching self-determination process as a matter of political stability and regional security;
- France to organise another independence referendum that genuinely reflects their will;
- On the UN to maintain Kanaky New Caledonia on the UN Committee of 24 list of non-self-governing territories to be decolonised.

Endorsed By:

- Alliance For Future Generations.
- **DIVA**- Diverse Voices and Action for Equality.
- **FWCC**- Fiji Women's Crisis Centre.
- **FWRM** - Fiji Women's Rights Movement.
- **FCC**- Fiji Council of Churches.
- **LLCTC**- Lauru Land Conference of Tribal Communities.
- **MILDA**- Melanesian Indigenous Land Defense Alliance.
- **NTP**- Nuclear Truth Project.
- **PCC**- Pacific Conference of Churches - Oikoumene Pasifika.
- Peace Movement Aotearoa.
- **PIANGO**- Pacific Islands Association of Non-governmental Organisations.
- **PANG**- Pacific Network on Globalisation.
- Pacific Women Mediators Networks.
- **YS**- Youngsolwara Pacific.
- **YWCA**- Fiji Young Women's Christian Association.