

PRESS RELEASE



Dawasamu High Chief Calls for Healing and Reconciliation as Legacy of 2000 Upheaval Continues

2026: The Turaga na Ratu of Dawasamu, Ratu Alivereti Wesikana, has called on the Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission (FTRC) to help facilitate healing, reconciliation, and the restoration of community vitality, saying unresolved wounds from the 2000 political upheaval continue to affect individuals, families, and the wider Vanua today.

Appearing before the Commission during a hearing in Suva, Ratu Alivereti reflected on the impact of the 2000 crisis on communities within Dawasamu, particularly the treatment of Indo-Fijian farmers during that period.

The hearing was presided over by FTRC Commissioner Sekove Naiqiolevu, accompanied by Commissioner Ana Laqeretabua and the FTRC Chairperson Joaquim da Fonseca.

As Turaga na Ratu of Dawasamu, Ratu Alivereti carries responsibilities for the leadership and welfare of the Vanua. He recalled a time before the upheaval when relationships between iTaukei villagers and Indo-Fijian farmers were built on cooperation, mutual respect, and economic interdependence.

Members of both communities interacted closely and supported one another through everyday social and economic activities, creating strong bonds that benefited the district.

However, he told the Commission that the events surrounding the 2000 political crisis led to the intimidation and mistreatment of Indo-Fijian farmers within the district.

“Members of the community participated in actions that caused harm and fear. Influential leaders at the time encouraged or supported such actions,” Ratu Alivereti stated. These events disrupted longstanding relationships between iTaukei and Indo-Fijian families and created divisions that continue to affect the community today.”

Ratu Alivereti emphasised that the consequences of those events extend far beyond those who directly experienced harm, noting, “The community continues to carry the burden of past wrongdoing.”

He described this burden as a continuing source of spiritual and social imbalance within the Vanua, noting that many individuals involved in the events have struggled to find peace and continue to live with feelings of guilt and regret.

“Many individuals who participated in the events have struggled to find peace and continue to live with feelings of guilt and regret. These unresolved issues have affected participation in community life and collective development efforts,” he explained.

The high chief also expressed concern about the impact on younger generations and community development. He said some young people have become disconnected from community initiatives and development activities, while several projects have remained incomplete or failed to progress as anticipated.

“In my view, these challenges are linked to unresolved tensions and the lingering effects of the events of 2000.”

Ratu Alivereti acknowledged the *matanigasau* presented to the Fiji Police Force in 2023 as an important act of acknowledgement, repentance, and reconciliation. He described the ceremony as an opportunity for the community to acknowledge past wrongdoing and seek forgiveness.

However, he stressed that reconciliation is an ongoing process requiring continued commitment from leaders and community members alike. He voiced support for initiatives that promote dialogue, truth-telling, accountability, and healing.

In his recommendations to the Commission, Ratu Alivereti called for continued dialogue between affected communities, greater support for community-based reconciliation processes, and initiatives that promote healing, forgiveness, and mutual understanding.

He also expressed a desire for the Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission to assist the Vanua in addressing unresolved issues and strengthening long-term social cohesion.

His testimony underscored a central lesson from Fiji’s political upheavals: that lasting reconciliation requires acknowledgement of past wrongs, accountability, and honest dialogue. Through truth-telling and culturally grounded processes, he said communities can rebuild trust, restore relationships, and create a stronger foundation for future generations.

About FTRC:

The FTRC is an independent entity set up for truth-telling, reconciliation, and national healing. The mandate of the FTRC is to examine past political upheavals and their impact on people's lives. The Commission is looking at the physical and emotional harm, loss of life and property, and systemic injustices on people.

The purpose of this work is to foster unity and social cohesion in a society where everyone feels safe, equal, included and able to thrive. The Commission seeks to honour the lived experiences of survivors by providing a platform for voices to be heard, validated, and acknowledged.

The Commission emphasises that truth-telling is not about retribution. It is about recognition, healing, to ensure that history is not repeated. Through reconciliation, the Commission aims to build a stronger and peaceful Fiji for future generations.

Note: The Commission is encouraging members of the public to contact us in relation to any of the above. We look forward to hearing from you. Reach us by phone, email, or through our Facebook page, where a contact form is also available.

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