

PRESS RELEASE



From Fear to Hope: Ravindra Lal Calls for Security, Equality and National Unity

2026: A quiet but powerful account of fear, resilience, and hope emerged as survivor Ravindra Lal shared his experiences during Fiji's past political upheaval.

He delivered his testimony before the Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission (FTRC) during a hearing held in Suva on Tuesday, 5 May presided over by Commissioners Rachna Nath and Rajendra Dass.

Mr Lal, originally from Lagalaga in Labasa and now living in Raiwaqa Settlement in Navua, recounted how the political upheaval of 1987 and 2000 disrupted his life, family, and livelihood.

He described periods of intense fear, where communities were confined to their homes, faced intimidation from armed personnel, and endured deep uncertainty in Labasa

Reflecting on the events of the political upheaval in 2000, he spoke of roadblocks, looting, and instability that forced families into survival mode. One of his most traumatic memories was being chased near the Sukanaivalu Army Barracks, Vaturekuka, Labasa, while travelling with his children. An experience that continues to affect him today.

Beyond the political upheavals of 2000, Mr Lal highlighted the lasting impacts, which include the loss of income, inability to work the land, and ongoing psychological distress. “Even now, there is still worry,” he shared, pointing to the long-term effects on those who lived through those periods.

Despite his experiences, Mr Lal’s message focused on building a better future. He emphasised the importance of dialogue, understanding and community level reconciliation efforts as foundations for building trust and unity in Fiji.

“We need to talk to each other, only then can we rebuild trust,” he said.

When asked about how he felt after sharing his story before the Commission, Mr Lal said it was a deeply positive experience.

“It feels good. I’m happy with the truth and reconciliation process. I’m grateful they called me so I could share what happened during the coups, what people went through and how we felt at that time,” he said.

He reflected on the importance of such a Commission in bringing communities together. “What we felt in the past, and what happened to us, is now something we can talk about together. A new generation is coming, and we can sit down, share openly, build friendships, and rebuild trust, creating a bridge between communities,” he added.

Mr Lal emphasised the importance of moving forward rather than remaining anchored in past trauma.

“Those events in 1987 and 2000 happened, but now we must move forward. If we keep holding onto the past, it will only grow heavier. We need to let go, focus on the future, and help the next generation build a better Fiji,” he said.

In outlining his recommendations, Mr Lal called for secure and transparent land and lease arrangements to ensure farmers can work without fear of displacement during or after any political upheaval. He also stressed the need for equal treatment under the law, so all citizens feel safe and respected.

As a survivor of the political upheavals, he called for reforms to strengthen stability and national unity, including improvements to land and lease arrangements to provide greater security for farmers, ensuring equal treatment for all citizens, and advancing constitutional reforms.

He also emphasised the need to rebuild trust through open national dialogue and to foster stronger relationships between communities, village leaders, and the broader public.

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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