



1. Please provide background information on the 2007 teachers' strike, and any reports on the repercussions that the strike has for teachers now.

2007 Teachers Strike – Background

The August 2007 teachers strike in Fiji was part of wider strikes by civil servants in response to the interim government's announcement in early 2007 that it would be cutting the pay of all civil servants by five percent and reducing the mandatory retirement age from 60 to 55.¹

Prior to the 2006 coup, a salary increase for civil servants had been negotiated with the government, to take effect in the last pay of December 2006. Another 2 percent adjustment of pay had been agreed to for the beginning of 2007.² A three year Industrial Relations Framework (IRF) had been established under a five year Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) signed by the Fiji Nursing Association (FNA), members of the Confederation of Public Sector Unions (CPSU – comprising the Fiji Public Service Association (FPSA) and Fiji Teacher's Union (FTU)) and the Public Service Commission (PSC). The MoA included provisions that would resolve industrial relations disputes dating back to 2003 and pay public servants the majority of outstanding payments and increments and scheduled cost of living adjustments owed to them.³

Initially, the interim government promised to pay the balance of payment due under the IRF, covering the years 2005 to 2007. The balance was slated to be paid sometime in 2007, but never eventuated.⁴

The FNA were the first to strike on 25 July 2007.⁵ Unions affiliated with the Fiji Islands Council of Trade Unions (FICTU – including the Fijian Teacher's Association) followed suit on 2 August. The teachers, however, called off their strike within a day⁶ after the

¹ 'PSC confirms 5 per cent pay cut for civil service' 2007, *Fiji Times Online*, Fiji Times website, 1 March <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=57986> – Accessed 22 July 2010 – Attachment 4

² Lutua, K. 2009, 'The Fiji nurses' strike' in Fraenkel, J., Firth, S. & Lal, B. U. (eds), *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A Coup to End All Coups?*, ANU E-Press, Canberra, p.254
http://epress.anu.edu.au/coup_coup/pdf/ch12.pdf – Accessed 21 July 2010 – Attachment 1

³ Lutua, K. 2009, 'The Fiji nurses' strike' in Fraenkel, J., Firth, S. & Lal, B. U. (eds), *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A Coup to End All Coups?*, ANU E-Press, Canberra, p.254
http://epress.anu.edu.au/coup_coup/pdf/ch12.pdf – Accessed 21 July 2010 – Attachment 1

⁴ Lutua, K. 2009, 'The Fiji nurses' strike' in Fraenkel, J., Firth, S. & Lal, B. U. (eds), *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A Coup to End All Coups?*, ANU E-Press, Canberra, p.258
http://epress.anu.edu.au/coup_coup/pdf/ch12.pdf – Accessed 21 July 2010 – Attachment 1

⁵ Williams, K. 2007, 'Fiji: Nurses, teachers strike against pay cut', *Green Left Weekly*, issue 170, Green Left website, 4 August <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/38103> – Accessed 20 July 2010 – Attachment 3

⁶ Lutua, K. 2009, 'The Fiji nurses' strike' in Fraenkel, J., Firth, S. & Lal, B. U. (eds), *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A Coup to End All Coups?*, ANU E-Press, Canberra, p.253
http://epress.anu.edu.au/coup_coup/pdf/ch12.pdf – Accessed 21 July 2010 – Attachment 1

government brought school holidays forward by two weeks.⁷ At its height the strike comprised 4000 teachers, 1500 nurses as well as other government employees.

Radio New Zealand International reported in July 2008 that by December 2007, civil service workers had received a one percent restoration of pay backdated to March 2007, and another two percent restoration in July 2008.⁸ The remainder was paid out in December 2008; however, the government claimed that it could not afford to offer teachers backpay for the pay restoration.⁹

Repercussions for Teachers

No reports were located that indicate there have been ongoing repercussions for teachers who participated in the strike, aside from the financial impacts of non-payment of wage increments and the reduction of the mandatory retirement age.

One report of a teacher losing his job for speaking out against the government was located. In May 2009 Tevita Koroi, also President of the Fijian Teacher's Association, was sacked for comments made in December 2008 in his capacity as FTA President. Koroi had called for a quick return to democracy in the country, and was subsequently suspended for breaking the Public Service Commission Code of Conduct, then sacked.¹⁰ While no other reports of teachers losing their jobs or being otherwise mistreated due to their political opinions were located, it may be of note that Koroi's sacking was not reported in the Fijian media.¹¹

Three reports were located regarding the impact of lowering the retirement age on Fiji's schools. *Radio New Zealand International* reported in March 2010 that estimates indicate an average of two teachers are retiring every day in Fiji because of the reduction in the retirement age.¹² This is reported to be causing a shortage of qualified staff in schools¹³, resulting in some student teachers being released early to teach fulltime and those trained to teach junior level students being asked to teach senior classes.¹⁴

Other civil servants have faced repercussions for perceived anti-government activity. *Amnesty International* reported in January 2010 that twenty workers from the Suva city council, including some in senior management positions, were suspended indefinitely and

⁷ Williams, K. 2007, 'Fiji: Nurses, teachers strike against pay cut', *Green Left Weekly*, issue 170, Green Left website, 4 August <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/38103> – Accessed 20 July 2010 – Attachment 3

⁸ 'Fiji interim government says it can't afford to offer teachers' backpay' 2008, *Radio New Zealand International*, Radio New Zealand website, 11 July <http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=40864> – Attachment 5

⁹ 'Civil servants pay back to square one' 2008, *Fiji Times Online*, Fiji Times website, 12 December <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=108683> – Accessed 22 July 2010 – Attachment 6; 'Fiji interim government says it can't afford to offer teachers' backpay' 2008, *Radio New Zealand International*, Radio New Zealand website, 11 July <http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=40864> – Attachment 5

¹⁰ 'Fiji principal sacked over call for democracy' 2009, *Radio New Zealand International*, Radio New Zealand website, 7 May <http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=46428> – Accessed 20 July 2010 – Attachment 7

¹¹ Eveston, A. 2009, 'Dismissing Democracy', *Australian Educator*, Vol 63, Spring, p. 11 <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/AE/Spr09p11.pdf> – Accessed 22 July 2010 – Attachment 8

¹² 'Two teachers a day estimated to be retiring in Fiji' 2010, *Radio New Zealand International*, Radio New Zealand website, 2 March <http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=52234> – Accessed 20 July 2010 – Attachment 10

¹³ 'Shortage of teachers worsens in Fiji' 2010, *Radio New Zealand International*, Radio New Zealand website, 3 March <http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=52257> – Accessed 20 July 2010 – Attachment 11

¹⁴ 'Student teachers ending studies early to fill gaps in schools' 2009, *Radio New Zealand International*, Radio New Zealand website, 24 May <http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=46728> – Accessed 20 July 2010 – Attachment 12

had their office computers seized. Officials from the Prime Minister's office accused the workers of being anti-government bloggers.¹⁵

Those involved in the 2007 strike as well as in industrial action generally also appear to be targeted by the government. In the aftermath of the 2007 strike, Taniela Tabu, spokesman for the Fiji Islands Council of Trade Unions, was arrested. He claimed to have been forced to strip to his underwear and humiliated, and threatened with death if he were summoned to the barracks again.¹⁶ The president and general secretary of the FNA were harassed by members of the security forces near their workplace prior to the nurses' strike.¹⁷ Trade Unionist Pramod Raie was approached at his residence by army officers on 8 January 2010 and was warned against organising a strike by members of his union employed by the Bank of Baroda.¹⁸

The US Department of State's 2009 Human Rights Report on Fiji notes that since the country's constitution was repealed following the 2006 coup, "unions [have] reported that the government use[s] the mediation process to punish unions deemed insufficiently cooperative with government policies, interrupting the collective bargaining process, interfering with mediation, and denying appeals for unrelated political reasons".¹⁹

2. Please provide background information and/or references on military service obligations for men in Fiji.

The 2010 *CIA World Factbook* states that the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) comprises of Land Forces and Naval Forces.²⁰ Military service is voluntary.²¹ There are approximately 3500 paid RFMF personnel; according to Jon Fraenkel in his book chapter 'The Fiji Coup of December 2006: who, what, where and why?' published in 2007.²² Fraenkel also states that "[i]n addition to 3,500 or so paid RFMF personnel, some 20–25,000 Fijians had passed through the military since independence, many serving on overseas peace-keeping missions. Perhaps 5,000 were no longer alive, but the remainder

¹⁵ Amnesty International 2010, 'Fiji: Downward spiral continues for human rights following persecution of prominent human rights lawyer', 19 January,

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA18/001/2010/en/8fb0dcc2-801c-49d3-855f-f37e8da4f007/asa180012010en.html> – Accessed 22 July 2010 – Attachment 9

¹⁶ Lutua, K. 2009, 'The Fiji nurses' strike' in Fraenkel, J., Firth, S. & Lal, B. U. (eds), *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A Coup to End All Coups?*, ANU E-Press, Canberra, p.253

http://epress.anu.edu.au/coup_coup/pdf/ch12.pdf – Accessed 21 July 2010 – Attachment 1

¹⁷ Lutua, K. 2009, 'The Fiji nurses' strike' in Fraenkel, J., Firth, S. & Lal, B. U. (eds), *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A Coup to End All Coups?*, ANU E-Press, Canberra, p.262

http://epress.anu.edu.au/coup_coup/pdf/ch12.pdf – Accessed 21 July 2010 – Attachment 1

¹⁸ Amnesty International 2010, 'Fiji: Downward spiral continues for human rights following persecution of prominent human rights lawyer', 19 January,

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA18/001/2010/en/8fb0dcc2-801c-49d3-855f-f37e8da4f007/asa180012010en.html> – Accessed 22 July 2010 – Attachment 9

¹⁹ US Department of State 2010, *2009 Human Rights Report: Fiji*, 11 March, s.7.b. – Attachment 16

²⁰ Central Intelligence Agency 2010, *The World Factbook: Fiji*, 24 June

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/faqs.html> – Accessed 22 July 2010 – Attachment 13

²¹ Central Intelligence Agency 2010, *The World Factbook: Fiji*, 24 June

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/faqs.html> – Accessed 22 July 2010 – Attachment 13

²² Fraenkel, J. 2007, 'The Fiji coup of December 2006: who, what, where and why?' in *From election to coup in Fiji. The 2006 campaign and its aftermath*, eds J.Fraenkel & S. Firth, ANU E Press website, p. 428

http://epress.anu.edu.au/fiji/pdf/whole_book.pdf – Accessed 4 July 2007 – Attachment 14

were all, at least in theory, military reservists”.²³ The *World Factbook* reports that the obligation of reservists to serve is to the age of 45.²⁴

The *Royal Fiji Military Forces Act* (1985) states the following regarding reservists:

A soldier of the Regular or Territorial Forces shall on the expiration of his period of enlistment or if re-engaged, of his last re-engagement be transferred, if he is then below the age of forty-five years, to the Reserve.²⁵

Thus men who have enlisted and served with the Royal Fiji Military Forces have reservist obligations until they reach the age of 45.

A previous research response, *FJI33706* of August 2008, provides more detailed information about the role of reservists in the 2006 coup and its aftermath, as well as an overview of the numbers and structure of the active and reserve forces.²⁶

Attachments

1. Lutua, K. 2009, ‘The Fiji nurses’ strike’ in Fraenkel, J., Firth, S. & Lal, B. U. (eds), *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A Coup to End All Coups?*, ANU E-Press, Canberra http://epress.anu.edu.au/coup_coup/pdf/ch12.pdf – Accessed 21 July 2010.
2. ‘Fiji to hire strike-breaking contractors’ 2007, *Channel Nine News*, Channel Nine News website, 3 August <http://news.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=274748&rss=yes> – Accessed 20 July 2010.
3. Williams, K. 2007, ‘Fiji: Nurses, teachers strike against pay cut’, *Green Left Weekly*, issue 170, Green Left website, 4 August <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/38103> – Accessed 20 July 2010.
4. ‘PSC confirms 5 per cent pay cut for civil service’ 2007, *Fiji Times Online*, Fiji Times website, 1 March <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=57986> – Accessed 22 July 2010.
5. ‘Fiji interim government says it can’t afford to offer teachers’ backpay’ 2008, *Radio New Zealand International*, Radio New Zealand website, 11 July <http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=40864>.
6. ‘Civil servants pay back to square one’ 2008, *Fiji Times Online*, Fiji Times website, 12 December <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=108683> – Accessed 22 July 2010.
7. ‘Fiji principal sacked over call for democracy’ 2009, *Radio New Zealand International*, Radio New Zealand website, 7 May <http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=46428> – Accessed 20 July 2010.

²³ Fraenkel, J. 2007, ‘The Fiji coup of December 2006: who, what, where and why?’ in *From election to coup in Fiji. The 2006 campaign and its aftermath*, eds J. Fraenkel & S. Firth, ANU E Press website, p. 428 http://epress.anu.edu.au/fiji/pdf/whole_book.pdf – Accessed 4 July 2007 – Attachment 14

²⁴ Central Intelligence Agency 2010, *The World Factbook: Fiji*, 24 June <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/faqs.html> – Accessed 22 July 2010 – Attachment 13

²⁵ *Royal Fiji Military Forces Act* (Revised Edition 1985), Pacific Islands Legal Information Institute (PacLII) http://www.pacii.org/fj/legis/consol_act/rfmfa276/ – Accessed 26 July 2010 – Attachment 17

²⁶ RRT Research & Information 2008, *Research Response FJI33706*, 26 August – Attachment 15

8. Eveston, A. 2009, 'Dismissing Democracy', *Australian Educator*, Vol 63, Spring, p. 11
<http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/AE/Spr09p11.pdf> – Accessed 22 July 2010.
9. Amnesty International 2010, 'Fiji: Downward spiral continues for human rights following persecution of prominent human rights lawyer', 19 January,
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA18/001/2010/en/8fb0dcc2-801c-49d3-855f-f37e8da4f007/asa180012010en.html> – Accessed 22 July 2010.
10. 'Two teachers a day estimated to be retiring in Fiji' 2010, *Radio New Zealand International*, Radio New Zealand website, 2 March
<http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=52234> – Accessed 20 July 2010.
11. 'Shortage of teachers worsens in Fiji' 2010, *Radio New Zealand International*, Radio New Zealand website, 3 March <http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=52257> – Accessed 20 July 2010.
12. 'Student teachers ending studies early to fill gaps in schools' 2009, *Radio New Zealand International*, Radio New Zealand website, 24 May
<http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=46728> – Accessed 20 July 2010.
13. Central Intelligence Agency 2010, *The World Factbook: Fiji*, 24 June
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/faqs.html> – Accessed 22 July 2010.
14. Fraenkel, J. 2007, 'The Fiji coup of December 2006: who, what, where and why?' in *From election to coup in Fiji. The 2006 campaign and its aftermath*, eds J.Fraenkel & S. Firth, ANU E Press website, p. 428 http://epress.anu.edu.au/fiji/pdf/whole_book.pdf – Accessed 4 July 2007.
15. RRT Research & Information 2008, *Research Response FJI33706*, 26 August
16. US Department of State 2010, *2009 Human Rights Report: Fiji*, 11 March, s.7.b.
17. *Royal Fiji Military Forces Act* (Revised Edition 1985), Pacific Islands Legal Information Institute (PacLII) http://www.paclii.org/fj/legis/consol_act/rfmfa276/ – Accessed 26 July 2010.