

Media Statement
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O'Neill: "Marape's Proposed Changes to Media Laws are against Democracy"

"I am both saddened and alarmed at the proposed way the Marape Government is dismantling democracy," said former Prime Minister and Member for Ialibu-Pangia, Mr Peter O'Neill.

"I am utterly convinced that if we uphold all the principles of a healthy democracy, we as a people will overcome any challenge whether it be economic, social or environmental. We are a strong people with the courage of our convictions and centuries old traditions and customs."

"But we will not be able to solve our problems and take up opportunities if we water down in any way our democratic principles."

To be a democracy means:

1. We have a safe and secure community
2. Government is transparent, responsive, and accountable to the people.
3. We have equality in seeking Justice and can receive fair treatment regardless of who we are
4. People can act, speak, and think freely (if it does not stop others doing the same)

1. "Our society is neither safe nor secure"

"The murders, rapes, violent crimes, tribal wars, and deadly riots have everyone in PNG and international investors and commentators convinced we are neither safe nor secure."

"Marape is so smart he believes he can dance with multiple international partners for our security, pitting giants such as China, the USA and Australia against each other, creating unnecessary tension and leaving behind our principle of friends to all and enemies to none."

2. "Our government is not transparent, responsive, or accountable. "

"The Auditor General has not been able to conduct an audit on Government since 2018. Despite record budgets and billions for cronies, there is no funding for the Auditor General to conduct any audits of even the PM's Department or DSIP or PSIP or the billions under Connect PNG or the other big scam, COVID-19."

"The National Procurement Commission has no public record freely available to report on tenders. The website is not up to date with only the PM's office tender for three lifts being publicised on the official NPC website in 2023."

"Government is controlled and micromanaged by political power. Bureaucrats and technocrats are undermined or caste aside meaning policies are devoid of expert inputs and implementation becomes difficult and fail to deliver positive impacts to our citizens."

3. **"Our Justice system seems to punish those who might oppose Government and favour those who blatantly kill, maim or misappropriate if they are in Government or connected to Government."**

"In the recent Cabinet reshuffle, a new Ministry was created in a blatant attempt to stifle key constitutional officers and have them report to the Prime Minister."

"Our Courts system remains strong and stable, and I believe is a bastion of hope for those seeking justice."

"Marape wants to control and dictate rather than trust our Constitution."

4. **"Those associated with Government can say and do as they wish. Those who oppose are increasingly subject to threats and new laws clamping down on free speech."**

"Threats to shutdown social media and the right to peaceful protest are common."

"New cyber laws and the increasing use of State of Emergency declarations to curb citizens' rights are more common than in our history. The COVID-19 SOE directives are still in place for instance well after the pandemic has passed."

To top it all off, today we learn Government are preparing to crack down on journalists with new media laws being urgently prepared and to be presented to Parliament very soon."

"They plan to curb free speech and freedom of the press to report by being able to jail any journalist or person who publishes anything they deem is misreporting."

"We know that Marape regularly goes off the deep end when either of the two national newspapers prints a story that does not cover him in glory or that challenges corruption or makes him look bad."

"Will these journalists and their editors now not just face the wrath and bad temper of Marape and his minions but also be subject to arrest and punishment?"

The last thing to go in the march from democracy to dictatorship is free speech."

"These new media laws are deeply concerning and need to be vehemently opposed every way possible."



Hon. Peter O'Neill, CMG, MP

Member for Ialibu-Pangia

Party Leader, People's National Congress Party