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Local News



Yumi Save Stopem Korapsen! La corruption rend un pays pauvre! Agissons contre la corruption!

A weekly column on Good Governance, Accountability, Transparency and Responsibility with a view to eliminating Corruption

Transparency Vanuatu
P.O. Box 335 Port Vila, Vanuatu
Tel#: 25715 Fax#: 25716

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Is The Biggest Threat to Vanuatu's Security Our Own National Security Force?



It was very disappointing for readers of the Independent newspaper's last two issues to read Evelyn Toa's articles which seemed to want to try to justify the actions of the VMF in killing John Bule while he was in custody, and in particular to excuse the role of the current Police Commissioner, Joshua Bong, who was head of the Correctional Services Department last year when there was repeated escapes of the prisoners, and when Bule was beaten to death.

As a journalist and the President of the Media Association of Vanuatu (MAV), Ms Toa has failed to address the real issue of police brutality as stated in the Coroner's report.

The criticism of Mr. Bong and his colleagues by various people in Vanuatu has got nothing to do with defending John Bule, who was convicted of the very serious crime of rape, and was rightly serving a prison sentence.

The issue is Police and VMF brutality - in this particular case, violence so bad that it led to over 30 serious injuries being inflicted on Mr. Bule before he died.

The issue is: Could this sort of thing happen again? Will it be more likely to happen again if nothing is done about this case and this footage?

Police brutality is not something new or recent.

In 1999, Gregory Gedion of Panna had to have his spleen removed following injuries caused by the Police. At the

time the Police Commissioner, Peter Bong was asking for a full investigation, and Amnesty International was making some recommendations for improvements of the prisons after a full investigation, at the same time investigation following the frequent incidences of Police brutality.

In a Community Perception study of the Vanuatu Police Force made by AusAid in 2006, the study found that as far as the treatment of people is concerned by the Police, 40% of the people interviewed thought that the Police mistreat people or is too violent.

This is also supported by the results of questions regarding the workable relationship between the Police and the community and the police and the young people. These results indicate a need to improve both relationships.

However this will be difficult if the police are seen as too violent or that they mistreat people. 60% of the ordinary people interviewed thought that most of the Police do not treat people fairly.

Does anyone who is aware of what was disclosed in the Coroner's report think that nothing should happen? That no one should be held accountable? That there should be no consequences for those seen to have been involved, or just as importantly - who were in charge?

Any form of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment carried out by any member of the Police or security force, whether it occurs during an

investigation, interrogation or otherwise, should be utterly condemned in the strongest terms by the government authorities as well as civil society.

Self discipline and self regulation by the forces has obviously failed. Where then will the reform come from? Probably not from within if the culture of violence continues.

As a result of this recent shameful incident coming to light, the general public rightly feels concerned that without any significant consequences, the VMF and Police will not be chastened or motivated to change. The VMF has reportedly increased its force members as well as having acquired the FAMAS automatic rifles from the French Military - hardly reassuring news when such indiscipline exists.

The allegations of incompetence, corruption, brutalization, and being a violator rather than an enforcer of the rule of law have all been voiced before against the police and the VME.

Yet no previous governments, nor the responsible authorities, have taken any necessary steps to look seriously into these allegations, or if they have, nothing has been made public.

Even cases of attack by the police on journalists seem to have been swept under the carpet, and the Public Prosecutor remained tight-lipped over these issues until today. This has bred a culture of impunity

and as a result, complaints against the police and the VMF have been totally ignored, while those who persist risk harassment and intimidation.

The functions of the Police are clearly stated out in Section 4 of the Police Act (CAP 105):

1. Functions of the Force
(1) It shall be an essential duty of the Force to maintain an unswerving vigilance for the prevention and suppression of crime.
- (2) The Force shall be employed throughout Vanuatu and its territorial waters for -
 - (a) the preservation of peace and the maintenance of order;
 - (b) the protection of life and property;
 - (c) the enforcement of laws;
 - (d) the prevention and detection of offences and the production of offend-

ers before the Courts; and
(e) such other duties as may be expressly provided for by law.
Section 17 of the Act refers to the declaration that all officers have to make when passing out from the police college:

17. Declaration
Upon completion of the training provided for in section 16(1) a probationary constable shall make and sign before a senior officer a declaration in the following form -

"I swear to obey the officers placed in command over me in all matters concerning the service to which I am appointed and, in the performance of my duties, only to use the powers given to me for the maintenance of public order and the enforcement of the Law".

It does not help that some detainees have apparently been held too long without trial. It

has been revealed that some of the escapees have been in jail for more than a year without being convicted in the Courts. It is the responsibility of the Public Prosecutor to make sure cases are brought quickly to the courts.

For the Police and the VMF to have an effective role and be held in respect by the public, it requires not only structural changes in the organization, but also major reworking of the procedures and police rule.

Police training should be oriented to bring in a change in the mindset and attitude in regard to police work and the recognition and respect of human rights.

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Is the biggest threat to Vanuatu's security our own national security force?

Three days of the police workshop were held in Port Vila. The workshop was attended by police officers and members of the public. The workshop was organized by Transparency Vanuatu and the Ministry of Justice. The workshop was held in a room at the Ministry of Justice. The workshop was held from Monday to Wednesday. The workshop was held from 9am to 5pm. The workshop was held in a room at the Ministry of Justice. The workshop was held from Monday to Wednesday. The workshop was held from 9am to 5pm.

Good Citizenship Workshop News

Three days workshop on good citizenship was held in Port Vila. The workshop was attended by police officers and members of the public. The workshop was organized by Transparency Vanuatu and the Ministry of Justice. The workshop was held in a room at the Ministry of Justice. The workshop was held from Monday to Wednesday. The workshop was held from 9am to 5pm. The workshop was held in a room at the Ministry of Justice. The workshop was held from Monday to Wednesday. The workshop was held from 9am to 5pm.

Education Forum redefines current Curriculum - A good step forward

The Education Forum has redefined the current curriculum. The forum was held in Port Vila. The forum was attended by education officials and members of the public. The forum was organized by Transparency Vanuatu and the Ministry of Education. The forum was held in a room at the Ministry of Education. The forum was held from Monday to Wednesday. The forum was held from 9am to 5pm. The forum was held in a room at the Ministry of Education. The forum was held from Monday to Wednesday. The forum was held from 9am to 5pm.



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