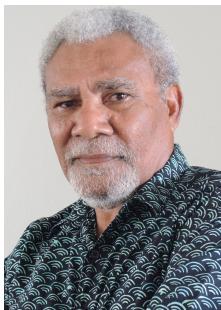


Public Statement
by Rt Hon Sir Mekere Morauta
Former Prime Minister and Member for Moresby North-West
Port Moresby, 11 August 2017

PM's constant abuse of legal process



Papua New Guinea is sick and tired of Prime Minister Peter O'Neill's constant frustration, misuse and abuse of legal processes.

"What is Mr O'Neill's problem," former Prime Minister and MP for Moresby North-West Sir Mekere Morauta asked.

"He has gone to the most extraordinary lengths to avoid having a conversation with the Fraud Squad on a significant corruption matter, the investigation into which he himself started.

"The arrest warrant was only issued because the Prime Minister refused to meet the police to have that conversation.

"Since then he has gone to court umpteen times, appealing every decision along the way, three years of politicking, legal roadblocks and police sackings.

"He had the current Police Commissioner, Mr Gari Baki, apply to the court to have the warrant of arrest discontinued.

"How then can the Police Commissioner say in his media statement of 10 August that he has little knowledge of the case, and that he would need to ask the Assistant Commissioner Crimes and the Director of the Fraud Squad to assist him to fully appreciate it?"

If he had little knowledge of the case, why did he make application to the court to have the warrant of arrest discontinued, Sir Mekere asked. Why did he lock the Fraud Squad out of their office and seize all the files on the case? Why did he go to court to try to nullify Task Force Sweep?

Sir Mekere said Mr Baki must think Papua New Guineans are very stupid. "Does he really think we can't see exactly what he is doing," he asked.

"When the court decision came down on Tuesday, instead of obeying it, he ran off to drink tea with Chief Secretary Isaac Lupari to find out what to do next.

"He then did nothing for a day, giving Mr O'Neill's lawyers time to lodge an appeal – and continue their abuse of legal process, the very thing that Justice Collin Makhail criticised in handing down the decision.

"Finally, at the same time as O'Neill's lawyers went to court, Mr Baki called a media conference, making out he was doing something, hoping not to run the risk of being charged with contempt of court.

"But instead of executing the arrest warrant, he talked about the "sensitive and delicate matter involving the Prime Minister", and there being a need to tread carefully.

"The Police Commissioner said that the option now open to him was to find out about the case, and then invite the Prime Minister to come in for an interview.

"But Police Commissioner that is exactly what your officers have been doing for the last three years, waiting for the Prime Minister to come to chat with them," Sir Mekere said.

"Is Papua New Guinea going to wait another three years for you to become acquainted with the case, and then another three for you to invite the PM – again - to talk to you about it?"

As former Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan said in an interview on EMTV in July 2014, "the only person who can end [this stalemate] is the Prime Minister himself" – by turning up to answer questions the police have on the Paraka scandal.

Sir Julius went on to say that "commanders must lead by example", and "follow laws". He further said that the position of Prime Minister was a very privileged one, and that incumbents must understand that they hold the position on behalf of the people.

"Mr O'Neill would do well to heed Sir Julius' views and advice," Sir Mekere said. "Those views are shared by every Papua New Guinean apart from those in Peter O'Neill's inner circle, and his well-paid lawyers."

"Why do the Prime Minister and the Police Commissioner think there is one law for them, and another for all other people?

"Mr O'Neill and Mr Baki should stop their constant abuse of process and do the right thing by the nation and the high public offices they hold."