



SPOKESPERSON V CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



MEDIA RELEASE

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Media encouraged to self -regulate to ensure good international practice

As Timor-Leste last week joined the commemoration of Human Rights Day, it is important to also reflect on press freedom, highlighting the duty and the right to inform and be informed.

The media in Timor-Leste is considered the fifth pillar of the State. Media and press freedoms are a vital part of establishing a democracy and the promotion and protection of a free, fair and independent media environment is a critical aspect of nation building.

As Timor-Leste celebrates the 10th Anniversary of the Restoration of Independence we recognize that in many ways we are still a young nation. The media, like all the institutions, agencies and pillars of the State is still developing with regulations of the sector still under consultation and review amongst and between sector leaders and participants. Some good practices aligned to international norms should be observed to promote the integrity of the media; especially during this critical period of Statebuilding.

International standards ensure a separation between advertorial, that is paid advertising, and editorial, the writing content of the newspaper. One person cannot do both. Creating separation protects both the media and citizens from any conflict of interest or potential abuse of powers. Abuse of powers can include people or organizations paying for favorable editorial, even if payments are made through legal means under “advertising costs”.

The opposite situation can be equally as compromising where those that will not pay for advertising may become the subject of aggressive and prolonged media campaigns. By separating advertorial and editorial, the writer of editorial is not privy to financial transactions related to advertising and therefore is kept from bias in writing editorial material.

As in any company or organization, financial transactions should be transparent to ensure no party, organization or individual is making inordinate financial contributions for a particular media agenda, either favorable or detrimental.



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Good governance mandates that no person, individual, organization, State institution or member thereof interferes or intimidates any journalist or media outlet in regards to content, investigative journalism or editorial. This impedes on press freedoms and undermines the role of an independent media.

In turn, it is important that the media in Timor-Leste take good care and due diligence in informing and educating the People of our nation with a true, impartial and un- biased representation of our laws and regulations while observing the Constitution.

Minister of State Pereira noted “We should be very proud of the advancements within our media sector and the men and women in it. They operate within a free and fair climate which is supported by laws which protect their work and press freedoms. As a new country, we must continue to aim for international best practice in all sectors to advance in our development trajectory and ensure fair and equitable outcomes for all citizens.” **ENDS**



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