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Mari Alkatiri : “Draft Media Law Treats Us Like children”

Former Prime Minister (PM) Dr. Mari Alkatiri is of the opinion that the draft media law under public consultation and discussed at an international seminar at Hotel Timor in Dili, treats Timorese as if they were children.

“I don’t know where this draft law came from, I know that it officially came from the Secretary of State for the media, in very good Portuguese language. I don’t know who wrote this law or which adviser wrote it, I don’t know who they listen to, because this law treats us like we are children, and that should not be done,” said Mari Alkatiri who was a panellist on the 2nd day of the international seminar with the same “regulating the media, building a culture of responsibility”, Wednesday 21st of March 2013.

Some articles of this draft media law, prohibits political parties from having their own means of communication. Because of this Mari Alkatiri says that the constitution of the RDTL is very clear that political parties are the foundation of Timor-Leste’s democracy, the organisation which is the Democratic base of the country and therefore is entitled to have its own information organisations.

“We can establish communication media, but we have to define their rules to limit publication, not just say it is not allowed, that is wrong,” Mari Alkatiri affirmed.

Mari Alkatiri encouraged journalists not to fear politicians attempting to suppress the freedom of the press, but that there is no freedom when there is no responsibility.

“There is no desire to limit freedom, but they must be responsibility,” Alkatiri added.

The former PM and Secretary General of FRETILIN asked journalists to continue to learn, so that they can emit information that is of quality and balanced.

Mari Alkatiri added that, people become journalists because they are brave, they have strength, and strength must also be contained, because they cannot be abuse of that power.

“It is a form of corruption to abuse the power that we have,” affirmed Mari Alkatiri.

Regarding the law on slanderous denunciation Dr. Mari Alkatiri said that it was not done with the object of persecuting, but to educate.

“This law on slanderous denunciation was drafted by me, not with the objective of persecuting anyone but to educate, because when the media has power they cannot abuse that power, because when it conflicts with the rights of others, then your rights are also diminished. Previously there was an article on defamation, but it is no longer a crime to deal with these things,” explained Dr. Mari Alkatiri.

According to Mari Alkatiri, a press that does not exercise responsibility is destructive and is no longer a constructive force, a media that is constructive in denouncing corruption, exercise social control, educate and inform, a fundamental responsibility which is not a crime, and if not done is tantamount to complicity.