

# EAST TIMOR: IFJ launches petition protest against draconian 'press law'



East Timorese journalists ... an endangered species in the face of the controversial media law. Image: Cafe Pacific

Friday, August 29, 2014

Item: 8931

SYDNEY (*International Federation of Journalists / Pacific Media Watch*): The Sydney-based Asia-Pacific office of the International Federation of Journalists has launched a global petition protesting against a controversial 'press law' passed earlier this year by Parliament, partially rejected by the Appeal Court as "unconstitutional" and awaiting presidential approval.

The IFJ's online petition describes the law as "incompatible with the basic principles of freedom of expression, the practical workings of a free media and the needs of a modern democracy".

The petition added: "Journalism should not be criminalised. Journalists should not be licensed at the whim of government appointed committees."

Thirty three international journalists, including SBS *Dateline's* Mark Davis, *Crikey* editor Marni Cordell, broadcaster George Negus, investigative journalist John Pilger, ABC *Four Corners* produce Peter Cronau and Pacific Media Centre director Dr David Robie, are among those who have signed the petition launch document.

The petition statement said:

*"We, the undersigned journalists and media of Australia, respectfully urge the President, Government and Parliament of Timor Leste, to reject the current proposed Media Law. The laws are incompatible with the basic principles of freedom of expression, the practical workings of a free media and the needs of a modern democracy.*

*"Whatever the best intentions of the proposed legislation are, the potential for political abuse by future administrations is enormous.*

*"The proposed legislation will leave journalists open to an endless array of fines and criminal prosecutions. It will force journalists to work to a vague list of national and economic objectives. It will place the right of both citizens and journalists to write, publish and express themselves into the hands of a potentially politicised committee.*

*"Journalism should not be criminalised. Journalists should not be licensed at the whim of government appointed committees.*

*"We urge you to reconsider this legislation."*

Signed:

**Mark Davis**, *Dateline*, SBS TV

**David Marr**, Journalist, *The Guardian Australia*

**Ruth Pollard**, Middle East Correspondent, *The Sydney Morning Herald*

**Tony Jones**, Presenter Q&A, ABC TV

**Ben Doherty**, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Fairfax

**Pacific Media Watch**  
PMC's media monitoring service

Pacific Media Watch is compiled for the Pacific Media Centre as a regional media freedom and educational resource by a network of journalists, students, stringers and commentators.  
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**Sophie McNeill**, Foreign Correspondent, ABC TV

**Steve Pennells**, Journalist, *The West Australian*

**Chris Bath**, TV Anchor, Seven Network News

**Rove McManus**, Presenter, The Project

**Zoe Daniel**, Presenter, *Foreign Correspondent*, ABC News

**Marni Cordell**, Editor, *Crikey News*

**George Negus**, Veteran International Journalist

**Ginny Stein**, African Correspondent, ABC News

**David O'Shea**, *Dateline*, SBS TV

**Sue Spencer**, Executive Producer Four Corners, ABC TV

**David Dare Parker**, Photojournalist

**Jock Cheetham**, Journalist, The Sydney Morning Herald, Fairfax

**Sarah Ferguson**, Journalist, ABC TV

**John Pilger**, Journalist, Author & Documentary Filmmaker

**Dr David Robie**, Director, Pacific Media Centre

**Mark Colvin**, Presenter, ABC Radio

**Peter Manning**, Former Head of ABC TV News and Current Affairs; Former Head of Current Affairs, Seven Network.

**Yalda Hakim**, Presenter/Correspondent, BBC World News

**Olivia Rousset**, Independent Journalist

**Yaara Bou Melhem**, Dateline SBS TV, Al Jazeera International

**Matt Brown**, Middle East Correspondent, ABC

**Helen Davidson**, Journalist, *The Guardian Australia*

**Michael Bachelard**, Indonesia Correspondent, *The Sydney Morning Herald*

**Chris Graham**, Editor, New Matilda

**John Garnaut**, Asia Pacific Editor, *The Sydney Morning Herald*

**Lee Glendinning**, Journalist, *The Guardian Australia*

**Phil Thornton**, Freelance Journalist in Southeast Asia

**Peter Cronau**, Senior Producer/Journalist, *Four Corners*, ABC TV

[Sign the East Timor media law petition](#)

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[East Timor court ruling sparks confusion](#)

[Timor-Leste's Parliament handed 'humiliating' defeat](#)



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