

We Are All in This Together: Evaluating Human Rights Restrictions in Selected Pacific Island Countries During Pandemic

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*Milla Vaha*¹

Abstract

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries around the world have resorted to restricting some human rights. Different measures from limiting the freedom of movement and assembly to the conditions to the right to work have been enforced to protect the right to life. Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are no exception; since the beginning of global outbreak, several PICs have enforced different limitations to human rights, and have done so even when the communities have not been directly exposed to the coronavirus at the time. This paper analyses these restrictions in four PICs (Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga) through the literature on limitations and derogations of international human rights law. While Pacific Island Countries should be praised for quick responses to the pandemic that have saved lives from the COVID-19, this article argues their governments must also be critically scrutinised for the consequences of the adopted responses from a broader human rights perspective.

Keywords: COVID-19; Fiji; Human Rights; Pacific Island Countries; Samoa; Solomon Islands; State of Emergency; Tonga

¹ Lecturer, School of Law and Social Sciences, The University of the South Pacific, Fiji. Email: milla.vaha@usp.ac.fj