

URGENT ACTION

AUSTRALIAN BLOGGER AT RISK OF EXTRADITION

Talalelei Pauga is a vocal critic of the Samoan government's policies and is known for protesting the former Samoan Prime Minister's 2018 visit to Australia by presenting him with a pig's head. Accused of conspiring to assassinate the former Samoan Prime Minister, Amnesty International believes these charges are politically motivated and that Pauga will not receive a fair trial in Samoa.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Prime Minister Fiame Naomi Mata'afa

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

P.O. Box 1866, APIA, Samoa

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Email: presssecretariat@samoa.ws

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to express my concern about **Talalelei Pauga (Pauga)**, an Australian citizen with dual Samoan nationality, who is subject to an extradition request from the former Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi (Tuilaepa) over an alleged plot to assassinate him. Because of his vocal opposition to the former Samoan Prime Minister, Amnesty International believes the charges against Pauga are politically motivated and without merit and that he may not receive a fair trial if extradited.

Under Australia's extradition laws with Samoa, minimal evidence is required for the Australian government to act on the extradition request from Samoa. As a result, Pauga has been detained in Australia since August 2020 (more than a year) without knowing the evidence against him. This raises serious concerns about arbitrary detention and the right to a fair trial.

Amnesty International and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers have expressed their concerns on the independence of judges and lawyers in Samoa following law reforms in 2020. In addition, the former Prime Minister Tuilaepa, now opposition leader in Samoa, continues to exert significant influence in the country that may undermine the right to a fair trial.

Samoa should re-establish its position as a leader on human rights in the Pacific region and ensure that no one is charged or imprisoned for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and political opinion.

I therefore call on you:

- **To drop politically motivated charges against Talalelei Pauga, cease extradition proceedings and secure his release;**
- **If there is credible evidence that a crime has been committed, ensure that such persons receive a fair trial in line with international human rights law and standards; and**
- **Ensure a prompt, impartial, independent, transparent and effective investigations into any allegations of political interference, threats or intimidation to judicial officers or lawyers, in any cases related to the former Prime Minister Tuilaepa.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Talalelei Pauga is a former Australian public servant who has been an Australian citizen for over twenty years. He is currently appealing the extradition proceedings through the Federal Court of Australia, with his trial before the Federal Court of Australia listed on 14 March 2022. Pauga was arrested and detained in August 2020 in Australia.

In late 2018, when the then Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi (Tuilaepa) visited Brisbane, a city in Australia, Pauga verbally protested political corruption committed by the foreign leader and presented him with a pig's head, a Samoan cultural slur. In 2019, Pauga and the co-accused Lemai Sione and Malele Paulo, were all charged with conspiracy to murder. The accused had all been vocal opponents of the Samoan government and Tuilaepa.

Under the Australian *Extradition Act 1988* (Cth) a person is only required to have been charged with an extradition offence to get extradited. That is: an offence recognised in both countries that carries a penalty of at least 12 months. This means that there is almost no evidentiary burden to overcome in requests of extradition and as such concerningly little evidence has been presented as to the charges Pauga is facing. The right to a fair trial includes the right to know what evidence is being presented in order to appropriately prepare a defence case with lawyers.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Samoan
You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 30 November 2021
Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Talalelei Pauga (He/Him)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

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