



**INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JUDGES
UNION INTERNATIONALE DES MAGISTRATS
UNIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE MAGISTRADOS
INTERNATIONALE VEREINIGUNG DER RICHTER
UNIONE INTERNAZIONALE DEI MAGISTRATI**
PALAZZO DI GIUSTIZIA - PIAZZA CAVOUR - 00193 ROMA - ITALY

April 2024

Kiribati: IAJ expresses grave concerns for the disregard for judicial independence

The IAJ watches with grave concern the deepening crisis involving the suspension of Mr. Justice David Lambourne of the High Court of Kiribati, an Australian citizen and the integrity of the Kiribati judicial system.

The United Nations-ratified Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct, the Judicial Integrity Group described judicial independence as ‘a prerequisite to the rule of law’. Similarly, the Beijing Statement of Principles of the Independence of the Judiciary in the LAWASIA Region – adopted at the 6th Biennial Conference of Chief Justices of Asia and the Pacific – said that judicial independence is ‘essential to the attainment of [the judiciary’s] objectives and to the proper performance of its functions in a free society observing the rule of law’.

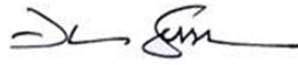
The Commonwealth Latimer House Principles, adopted by consensus by the Commonwealth Heads of Government in 2003, and incorporated into the Charter of the Commonwealth commits each member state (including Kiribati) to “an independent, impartial, honest and competent judiciary.”

As a member of both the Commonwealth of Nations and the international community, Kiribati has an obligation to respect the separation of powers and ensure the independence of the judiciary by complying with due process and court orders.

Judicial independence requires that judges are free from influence and can apply the law equally to all, without fear, favour, affection or ill-will. An independent judiciary is underpinned by the adoption of transparent procedures for the removal or suspension of judges, following fair and open processes that are free from political influence or motivation.

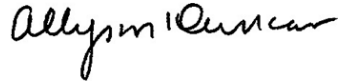
A free society exists so long as it is governed by the rule of law.

The IAJ strongly opposes any action that threatens the independence of the judiciary in Kiribati and implores the Kiribati Government to be faithful to the principles that it has agreed to abide by.



Duro Sessa

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