



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Fiji

Fiji – FJI36357 – Mokani – Sitiveni
Raturala – Peoples Charter – Extrajudicial
killings
25 March 2010

1. Where is the village of Mokani?

Mokani is located some 24 kms north east of Suva in Bau *tikina*, Tailevu province on Viti Levu island.

According to the *Microsoft Encarta Interactive Atlas* Mokani is some 24 kms north east of Suva. A *Microsoft Encarta Interactive Atlas* map showing the location of Mokani (highlighted in yellow) is on the next page. Information accessed on the AllExperts website lists the village of Mokani as being in Bau *tikina*.¹ *Tikinas* are local government districts comprising several connected social groups, the *vanua*.²

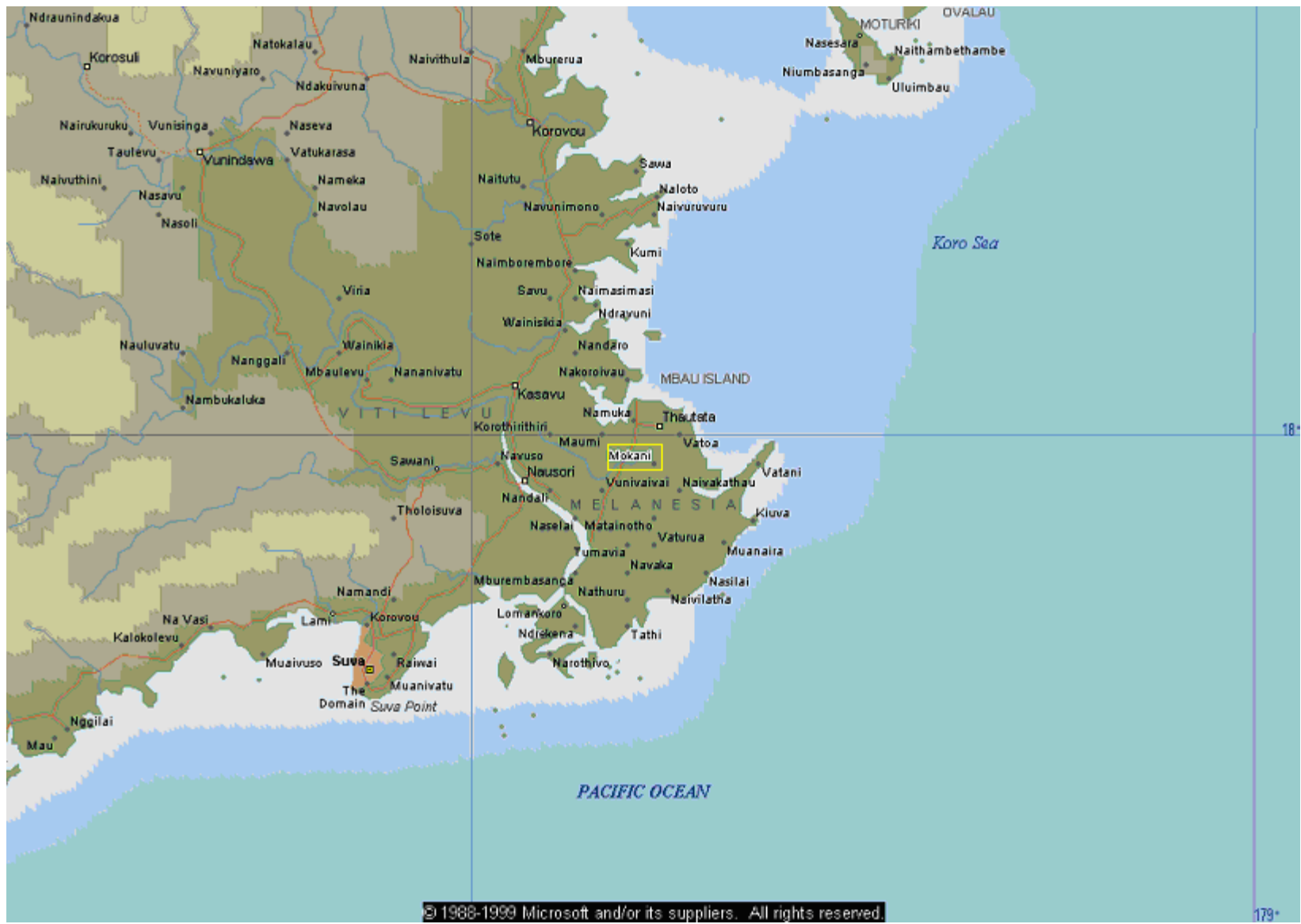
A 1997 map of the provinces and *tikinas* on Viti Levu island shows that Bau *tikina* adjoins the north of Nakelo *tikina* with both being in Tailevu province.³

¹ 'House of Chiefs (Fiji)' (undated), AllExperts website

[http://en.allexperts.com/e/h/ho/house_of_chiefs_\(fiji\).htm](http://en.allexperts.com/e/h/ho/house_of_chiefs_(fiji).htm) – Accessed 18 March 2010 – Attachment 1.

² Firth, Stewart and Fraenkel, Jon 'Changing calculus and shifting visions' in Fraenkel, Jon and Firth, Stewart (eds) 2007, *From Election to Coup in Fiji: The 2006 campaign and its aftermath*, Australian National University E Press, Canberra, p.10 – Attachment 2.

³ Schlossberg, Marc 1997, 'Provinces and Tikinas: Viti Levu' in *The Provincial Profile Mapped: A Prototype Social Atlas for Fiji*, University of Oregon website, p.3 <http://www.uoregon.edu/~schlossb/articles/pprofile.pdf> – Accessed 28 March 2007 – Attachment 3.



2. Are there any reports that two villagers in Mokani were killed for refusing to sign the Peoples Charter?

No information was found on two villagers being killed in Mokani for refusing to sign the Peoples Charter. There are reports that in January 2007 a villager Nimilote Verebasaga from Nakaulevu village, in Nakelo, died after being taken into military custody.⁴ Although the location of Nakaulevu village was not found, a news article describes it as being “about 20 minutes drive to Nausori Town”.⁵ As Nausori is some 9 kms to the east of Mokani village (see map on the previous page) and that Nakelo and Bau *tikinas* adjoin, it is possible that Nakaulevu is between Nausori and Mokani. No information was found connecting this death to the Peoples Charter.

The most recent US State Department report describes the Peoples Charter (formally named the Peoples Charter for Change, Peace and Progress) as “a domestic policy initiative of the Bainimarama government”.⁶ The Peoples Charter states that it was an initiative of the interim government launched in September 2007.⁷ News articles, however, indicate that the Charter’s framework document had been circulating for comment earlier in 2007.⁸ It was approved on 19 December 2008.⁹ The Charter aims to “Build a Better Fiji for All” through 11 separate pillars covering issues such as governance, economic growth, development and health.¹⁰

3. Are there any reports that the army recruited Sitiveni Raturala to encourage people to sign the Charter?

Sitiveni Raturala was recruited into the military’s public relations team after being sacked as a radio host in 2006 and before the Peoples Charter initiative began in 2007. In 2007 there are news articles reporting that Sitiveni Raturala encouraged people to sign the Charter.

Sitiveni Raturala was a radio host employed by the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation and was sacked in March 2006.¹¹ Raturala was reportedly sacked for interviewing Frank Bainimarama

⁴ Nawaikama, Sakiasi 2009, ‘Soldier guilty of manslaughter’, *Fiji Times*, 7 April – Attachment 4; ‘Military blamed for youth’s death’ 2007, *Fiji Times*, 26 February <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=57762> – Accessed 24 August 2009 – Attachment 5; ‘Military death scares village’ 2007, *Fiji Times*, 7 January <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?ref=archive&id=54749> – Accessed 22 March 2010 – Attachment 6.

⁵ ‘Military death scares village’ 2007, *Fiji Times*, 7 January <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?ref=archive&id=54749> – Accessed 22 March 2010 – Attachment 6.

⁶ US Department of State 2010, ‘Role of the Police and Security Apparatus’ in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Fiji*, 11 March – Attachment 7.

⁷ National Council for Building a Better Fiji 2008, *Fiji – Peoples Charter for Change, Peace & Progress*, 15 December, p.i <http://www.fijipeople charter.com.fj/finalCharter.pdf> – Accessed 24 August 2009 – Attachment 8.

⁸ Raju, Shailendra 2007, ‘What is wrong with the idea of a people’s charter’, *Fiji Times*, 22 December <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=77055> – Accessed 23 March 2010 – Attachment 9; Raicola, Verenaisi 2007, ‘Questions for the charter’, *Fiji Times*, 20 June <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=64898> – Accessed 21 June 2007 – Attachment 10; ‘Submission date for people’s charter extended’ 2007, *Fiji Times*, 29 May <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?ref=archive&id=63562> – Accessed 23 March 2010 – Attachment 11.

⁹ Foster, Sophie 2008, ‘What Iloilo approved’, *Fiji Times*, 20 December <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=109386> – Accessed 24 August 2009 – Attachment 12.

¹⁰ National Council for Building a Better Fiji 2008, *Fiji – Peoples Charter for Change, Peace & Progress*, 15 December, pp.i,9 <http://www.fijipeople charter.com.fj/finalCharter.pdf> – Accessed 24 August 2009 – Attachment 8.

¹¹ ‘Fiji: State radio sacks military review host’ 2006, Pacific Media Watch, source: *Fiji Times*, 14 March <http://www.pmw.c2o.org/2006/fiji4890.html> – Accessed 22 March 2010 – Attachment 13.

and not allowing time for the public to ask questions on air. He was then quickly recruited into the military's public relations team.¹²

The US State Department also reported that the Fijian army "participated in the awareness campaign to gain support" for the Peoples Charter.¹³ News articles indicate that Captain Sitiveni Raturala played a role in councils accepting the Peoples Charter which included making presentations and explaining the Charter.¹⁴

4. Were villagers expected to sign the Charter?

Although not explicitly stated in various sources there appears to have been an expectation that people would sign response forms supporting the Peoples Charter. Government sources were cited as stating that there was no obligation for people to sign the response forms; however, news articles reported that police and soldiers were demanding people sign them.

An August 2008 *Fiji Daily Post* news article noted that a two month education and consultation process on the Charter was to begin through public meetings and media education. Every household was to receive a copy of the Charter with supporting material.¹⁵ A *Fiji Times* news article reported a government source as stating that people were not obliged to sign the response forms accompanying the draft Charter. The source had said that "response forms were for individuals to voluntarily fill in so that they could verify their knowledge and opinions on the Charter".¹⁶

There are news articles, however, reporting that people were told to sign the response forms. One writer, June Baledrokadroka (who had been Bainimarama's Land Forces Commander until he challenged the attacks on Fiji's then elected government, arrested after the 2006 coup and now at the Australian National University) wrote on people supporting the Charter as follows:

...During last year's [2008] Charter consultation propaganda exercise, civil servants were forced to tour the country soliciting support. Many of the signatories filled in pro-Charter forms under duress or did not know what they were signing.¹⁷

The *Fiji Times* also reported that at the end of one meeting "attendees were told to fill forms to declare their support, or otherwise, for the proposed People's Charter". The article continued that at religious gatherings "government teams accompanied by uniformed police and soldiers in plain clothes distributed the charter document and demanded they be signed on

¹² Ratuva, Steven 'The pre-election 'cold war': the role of the Fiji military during the 2006 election' in Fraenkel, Jon and Firth, Stewart (eds) 2007, *From Election to Coup in Fiji: The 2006 campaign and its aftermath*, Australian National University E Press, Canberra, p.42 – Attachment 14.

¹³ US Department of State 2010, 'Role of the Police and Security Apparatus' in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Fiji*, 11 March – Attachment 7.

¹⁴ 'Elders accept charter' 2009, *Fiji Times*, 1 May – Attachment 15; Loanakadavu, Samu 2009, 'Kadavu pledges charter support', *Fiji Times*, 23 April – Attachment 16.

¹⁵ 'Change, peace and progress are the guiding words that open the draft of the People's Charter endorsed yesterday by the National Council for Building Better Fiji (NCBBF)' 2008, Pacific Media Watch, source: *Fiji Daily Post*, 7 August – Attachment 17.

¹⁶ Rauto, Mary 2008, 'People 'not obliged' (sic) to sign forms', *Fiji Times*, 2 September – Attachment 18.

¹⁷ Baledrokadroka, June 2009, 'Those with loud voices must speak up to restore democracy in Fiji', *National Times* 14 April <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/those-with-loud-voices-must-speak-up-to-restore-democracy-in-fiji-20090413-a4q3.html> – Accessed 16 October 2009 – Attachment 19.

the spot”.¹⁸ Another *Fiji Times* article reported that police were “directed to get people to sign the response forms”.¹⁹

The police also reportedly warned people about making comments against the Charter. A police spokesperson stated that although not all people making anti-Charter comments would be arrested or taken in for questioning those who made comments contravening the Public Order Act would be.²⁰

5. Were government services withdrawn if the Charter was not signed?

No information was found indicating that government services were withdrawn if the Charter was not signed. Media sources, however, have linked the approval and funding of some capital projects to accepting the Charter.

In a May 2009 *Fiji Times* news article it was reported that Sitiveni Raturala (see question 3) explained to Lomaiviti Provincial Council members, after they had agreed to accept the Charter, that “they would now have a committee to look into the projects which were earmarked for the next five years.”²¹

According to an April 2009 *Fiji Times* news article a *tikina* chief of the Kadavu Provincial Council gave the following reasons for accepting the Charter after rejecting it in 2008:

“Times have changed since the last meeting. The decision that was made to reject the charter at the time was made in a different state of government and situation. Now we have a different machinery of government because there is no Constitution and we need to work together in support of the present government. Otherwise, there will be no development on Kadavu in the next five years,” ...²²

The *Fiji Times* in a December 2008 article also mentioned that villagers from Naqali supported the Charter because the interim government had approved development works, such as a bridge and the acquisition of a motor vehicle fleet, for the area.²³

Attachments

1. ‘House of Chiefs (Fiji)’ (undated), AllExperts website [http://en.allexperts.com/e/h/ho/house_of_chiefs_\(fiji\).htm](http://en.allexperts.com/e/h/ho/house_of_chiefs_(fiji).htm) – Accessed 18 March 2010.
2. Firth, Stewart and Fraenkel, Jon ‘Changing calculus and shifting visions’ in Fraenkel, Jon and Firth, Stewart (eds) 2007, *From Election to Coup in Fiji: The 2006 campaign and its aftermath*, Australian National University E Press, Canberra, p.10.
3. Schlossberg, Marc 1997, ‘Provinces and Tikinas: Viti Levu’ in *The Provincial Profile Mapped: A Prototype Social Atlas for Fiji*, University of Oregon website, p.3 <http://www.uoregon.edu/~schlossb/articles/pprofile.pdf> – Accessed 28 March 2007.

¹⁸ ‘Stop the nonsense’ 2008, *Fiji Times*, 4 September – Attachment 20.

¹⁹ ‘Charter confusion’ 2008, *Fiji Times*, 2 December <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=107772> – Accessed 24 August 2009 – Attachment 21.

²⁰ Kazmi, Kristina 2008, ‘Interim Government in Fiji Cracks Down on Opposition to Draft Charter’, *Global Insight Daily Analysis*, 13 August – Attachment 22; ‘Police advise public against anti-Charter comments’ 2008, *Fiji Sun*, 10 August http://www.fijisun.com.fj/main_page/view.asp?id=4267 – Accessed 11 August 2008 – Attachment 23.

²¹ ‘Elders accept charter’ 2009, *Fiji Times*, 1 May – Attachment 15.

²² Loanakadavu, Samu 2009, ‘Kadavu pledges charter support’, *Fiji Times*, 23 April – Attachment 16.

²³ Loanakadavu, Samuela 2008, ‘Charter’s good, we have roads, say villagers’, *Fiji Times*, 21 December – Attachment 24.

4. Nawaikama, Sakiasi 2009, 'Soldier guilty of manslaughter', *Fiji Times*, 7 April. (FACTIVA)
5. 'Military blamed for youth's death' 2007, *Fiji Times*, 26 February <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=57762> – Accessed 24 August 2009.
6. 'Military death scares village' 2007, *Fiji Times*, 7 January <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?ref=archive&id=54749> – Accessed 22 March 2010.
7. US Department of State 2010, 'Role of the Police and Security Apparatus' in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Fiji*, 11 March.
8. National Council for Building a Better Fiji 2008, *Fiji – Peoples Charter for Change, Peace & Progress*, 15 December, pp.i,9 <http://www.fijipeoplesCharter.com.fj/finalCharter.pdf> – Accessed 24 August 2009.
9. Raju, Shailendra 2007, 'What is wrong with the idea of a people's charter', *Fiji Times*, 22 December <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=77055> – Accessed 23 March 2010.
10. Raicola, Verenaisi 2007, 'Questions for the charter', *Fiji Times*, 20 June <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=64898> – Accessed 21 June 2007. (CISNET Fiji CX179609)
11. 'Submission date for people's charter extended' 2007, *Fiji Times*, 29 May <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?ref=archive&id=63562> – Accessed 23 March 2010.
12. Foster, Sophie 2008, 'What Iloilo approved', *Fiji Times*, 20 December <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=109386> – Accessed 24 August 2009.
13. 'Fiji: State radio sacks military review host' 2006, Pacific Media Watch, source: *Fiji Times*, 14 March <http://www.pmw.c2o.org/2006/fiji4890.html> – Accessed 22 March 2010.
14. Ratuva, Steven 'The pre-election 'cold war': the role of the Fiji military during the 2006 election' in Fraenkel, Jon and Firth, Stewart (eds) 2007, *From Election to Coup in Fiji: The 2006 campaign and its aftermath*, Australian National University E Press, Canberra, pp.26-45.
15. 'Elders accept charter' 2009, *Fiji Times*, 1 May. (FACTIVA)
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17. 'Change, peace and progress are the guiding words that open the draft of the People's Charter endorsed yesterday by the National Council for Building Better Fiji (NCBBF)' 2008, Pacific Media Watch, source: *Fiji Daily Post*, 7 August. (CISNET Fiji CX207336)
18. Rauto, Mary 2008, 'People 'not obligied' (sic) to sign forms', *Fiji Times*, 2 September. (FACTIVA)
19. Baledrokadroka, Jone 2009, 'Those with loud voices must speak up to restore democracy in Fiji', *National Times* 14 April <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/those-with-loud-voices-must-speak-up-to-restore-democracy-in-fiji-20090413-a4q3.html> – Accessed 16 October 2009.

20. 'Stop the nonsense' 2008, *Fiji Times*, 4 September. (FACTIVA)
21. 'Charter confusion' 2008, *Fiji Times*, 2 December
<http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=107772> – Accessed 24 August 2009.
22. Kazmi, Kristina 2008, 'Interim Government in Fiji Cracks Down on Opposition to Draft Charter', *Global Insight Daily Analysis*, 13 August. (FACTIVA)
23. 'Police advise public against anti-Charter comments' 2008, *Fiji Sun*, 10 August
http://www.fjisun.com.fj/main_page/view.asp?id=4267 – Accessed 11 August 2008.
(CISNET Fiji CX207484)
24. Loanakadavu, Samuela 2008, 'Charter's good, we have roads, say villagers', *Fiji Times*, 21 December. (FACTIVA)