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PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Silencing of Journalist is the Latest Attack on Constitutional Rights

Minister for Communication must advise public what Government will do to rectify violation of journalistic integrity

Port Moresby, 26th November 2018 – Transparency International PNG (TIPNG) believes firmly that the democratic freedoms that allow journalists and citizens to question those in power must not be curtailed. TIPNG unequivocally supports the call by the Media Council of Papua New Guinea (MCPNG) for the reinstatement of EMTV Journalist Scott Waide. TIPNG said this in a recent media statement after allegations that Mr. Waide was suspended by his employer because of his reports on Government failings.

MCPNG said Mr. Waide, EMTV's Lae Bureau Chief, was suspended for airing a story considered by the Media Niugini Ltd (MNL) Board, the Kumul Telikom Holdings Ltd (KTHL) Board and the Kumul Consolidated Holdings Ltd (KCHL) Board, to be 'negative'. EMTV which is a free-to-air TV station operates as MNL, and was acquired by Telikom, which is now KTHL and is part of the government's portfolio of state-owned assets under KCHL.

"Mr. Waide's silencing by the state apparatus is unfortunately the culmination of a series of attacks on Papua New Guineans' constitutional freedoms, particularly Section 46 which provides Freedom of Expression. If Mr. Waide has not violated his employment conditions, the MNL Board may be in breach of his Section 46 Right as a citizen and a journalist by suspending him for his reporting. The Minister for Communication must be clear and advise the general public and the international community on what the Government will do to rectify this violation of journalistic integrity" said Chairman of TIPNG Lawrence Stephens

"Media outlets and journalists are guaranteed under the Constitution to publish without fear or favour. In the past year, Papua New Guinea has had indications of the curtailing of freedoms with the passing of the Cybercrime Act. That legislation was used to charge a blogger for calling the Electoral Commissioner a 'tomato' - luckily the courts threw the case out," added Stephens.

In 2018 the State threatened to shut-down social-media platforms, which led to derision in the lead up to an APEC 2018 agenda which pushed inclusivity and the 'digital future'. Earlier this month local media personnel were reportedly barred by a foreign government, with mute acquiescence by our own government, from reporting on a state visit to the National Parliament. The penultimate insult came from rampaging police and correctional officers last week, who assaulted journalists with impunity.

TIPNG backs the MCPNG and urges all Papua New Guineans to demonstrate their support of Mr. Waide and our media organisations.

Papua New Guinea must not tolerate bullies with thin skins lashing out when their wrongs are pointed out by the media for the public good. Mr. Waide's suspension and the other instances of media repression should cause all citizens to reflect fundamentally on the kind of democracy we want in Papua New Guinea.

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What is TIPNG?

TIPNG is a member of Transparency International a global anti corruption movement committed to fighting corruption. TIPNG is an independent organization in PNG known as a Chapter of the international movement. The PNG chapter advocates against corruption and promotes transparency, good governance, honesty and accountability both in private and public sector dealings. TIPNG tries to assist strengthen the integrity systems of our country such as the police, the parliament, the public services and the judiciary.