



FIJI HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

GPO Private Mail Bag
SUVA, FIJI ISLANDS

11th December 2007

The Editor,
Fiji Times,
SUVA

Dear Sir,

Thank you for the prominence given in your editorial (FT 11/12/07) to part of my World Human Rights Day statement.

Unfortunately your readers are somewhat in the dark about what I actually said in my statement to incur such a vituperative response from the Fiji Times editor because the report of my statement was buried in a story on an unrelated matter in an obscure part of your paper.

Fiji Times needs to review its apparent lack of technical competence in reporting on stories about which it also writes the editorial. We received many calls from the public, after they had read your editorial, requesting copies of my statement because they wanted to know what all the fuss was about.

If you must write an editorial about what I say, please do also allow your readers the opportunity (and right) to read what I have said before jumping in, boots and all, with your reaction.

In keeping with the principle of the public's right to information, we try to make it easy for the media by issuing written statements but these are easily manipulated on the basis of editorial policy on a particular story- the 'notorious angle' as local journalists used to call it in the old days when I worked for the Fiji Times.

Having an alternative media is a good idea. People need to receive different viewpoints. They should be allowed to make up their own minds about things without being forced into one direction or another by editorials or 'angles'. The media is purportedly quite powerful but it would be a mistake to under-estimate the comprehension, intelligence and sheer power of readers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shaista Shameem". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'S' being particularly large and stylized.

Dr Shaista Shameem