



JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS: BLONG YUMI



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Introduction

Justice and human rights are essential for a peaceful, secure and sovereign Vanuatu. A strong justice system not only protects individual freedoms but also strengthens national security by maintaining stability, upholding the rule of law and preventing conflict.

Our legal system and cultural traditions work together to protect everyone's rights and promotes peace. This podcast/guide explains what rights we have, and how our justice system and kastom play an important role in keeping our communities safe and secure.

Justice and Human rights come under Pilar 3 of the National Security Strategy which captures our national security objectives.



Rights and Freedoms in Vanuatu

Article 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu guarantees the following important rights and freedoms:

- The right to personal security
- Equal treatment under the law
- Protection of basic human rights

These rights form the backbone of a safe and united society. When rights are respected, grievances are reduced, activism is less likely to grow and national cohesion is protected.

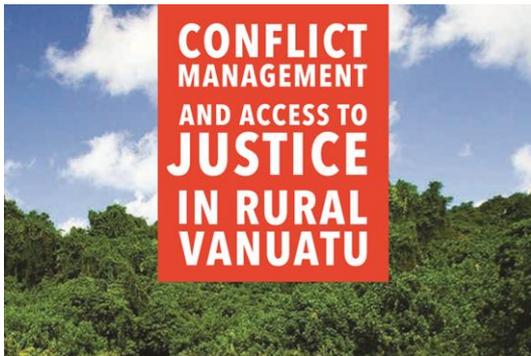
Vanuatu also supports global human rights through international human rights treaties. These include:

- CEDAW – Protecting women from discrimination
- CRC – Protecting children's rights
- CRPD – Supporting people with disabilities
- CAT – Preventing torture
- ICCPR – Ensuring civil and political rights



By upholding these commitments, Vanuatu strengthens its international reputation, internal resilience and contributes to the global peace and security.

Justice Systems: Kastom and State



Vanuatu is unique – we have two systems that work together:

- Kastom system – Guided by chiefs, culture, language and community values resolves disputes quickly and helps to maintain peace
- State system – Based on modern laws and formal courts system to ensure fairness, consistency and accountability

The Justice and Community Services Sector Strategy helps connect these two systems to improve access to justice especially in rural areas — reducing the likelihood of conflict and reinforces trust in the government.

Land and Custom

Unresolved land conflicts especially involving foreign ownership can lead to unrest and weaken national cohesion. Strengthening land governance directly supports peace and sovereignty.

- Land is central to Ni-Vanuatu identity and prosperity
- The Constitution acknowledges customary rules guide land ownership
- Land disputes are resolved in nakamals, reducing tension and avoiding the escalation of conflict
- The Custom Land Management Act is under review to improve clarity, fairness and promote development without undermining community security

Key Challenges

While Vanuatu has a strong foundation, we still face challenges:

- Limited access to justice for women can contribute to social instability
- Low legal literacy makes communities vulnerable to exploitation and deception

- Court delays due to limited judges and lawyers can weaken public trust in institutions
- Limited police presence in remote areas can lead to an increase in crime and disgruntled rural populations
- Overcrowded prisons and repeat offenders put a strain on justice and social systems
- Land disputes, especially with foreign ownership and unclear processes threatens stability and national control of critical infrastructure



Each of these challenges has security implications, making justice reform not just a legal priority, but a national priority.

Strengthening Law and Order

A secure Vanuatu relies on an effective, coordinated justice sector. The government is working to:

- Increase coordination among the 14 law and justice agencies
- Revitalise the Combined Law Agency Group
- Expand police presence through 72 Area Councils
- Review the Department of Correctional Services and prison system
- Continue legal reforms and training

These efforts protect against internal threats and strengthen public confidence in the justice system.

Human Rights in Practice

Vanuatu respects human rights which promote peace and unity; however, we still face challenges:

- Gender-based violence undermines national development and safety
- Police misconduct damages trust in law enforcement
- People with disabilities need more support to ensure they can fully participate in their communities



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VANUATU

National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030



1.47%

of the population had severe or total visual disability



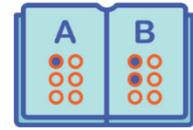
0.93%

of the population had severe or total hearing disability



1.58%

of the population had severe or total moving disability



0.82%

of the population had severe or total senility and/or amnesia

Vanuatu Bureau of Statistics Disability Infographic 2020

Plans to establish a Human Rights Commission and Eminent Persons Group will help clarify the roles and responsibilities between of the state, the chiefs, and the churches in promoting rights, justice, and peaceful resolution of disputes.

The Role of Communities

Everyone has a role in protecting justice and human rights:

- Chiefs and churches help resolve conflicts and teach values
- Media, legal system and civil society raise awareness and hold government accountable
- Speak up for your rights and support others in doing the same

When communities work with the government, we build a stronger, safer and more resilient Vanuatu.

Moving Forward Together

Vanuatu is striving to build a justice system that reflects our values and meets our needs. By blending kastom and modern law, protecting human rights, and involving the whole community, we can create a fair and safe Vanuatu for everyone.

For More Information

Visit your local Area Council, your Municipality, speak to your community chief, or contact the National Security Council Secretariat, or the Ministry of Justice and Community Services or the Ministry of Internal Affairs for more resources.



**NATIONAL SECURITY
COUNCIL SECRETARIAT**



**MINISTRY OF JUSTICE &
COMMUNITY SERVICES**

