

**Public Statement  
by Rt Hon Sir Mekere Morauta  
Port Moresby, 15 June 2017**

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**What does PM know about the elections that we don't?**



Prime Minister Peter O'Neill has once again told us that PNC will win more than 40 seats and form the next government.

Why the absolute confidence, Mr Prime Minister? This is an election with thousands of candidates and many parties competing on a level playing field under the same rules.

Or is it? Tell us all what gives you this absolute confidence. Have you got any special advantage over other candidates and parties? Do you know something that we don't know?

"Public sentiment, including in his own electorate, is firmly against him and PNC," former Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta said today.

"The Prime Minister and his party are on the nose. He and his candidates have been made unwelcome in a number of places, where he has been booed and jeered and forced to decamp the scene in undignified haste.

"Everywhere they go they hide behind squads of armed guards and redcap hooligans, who are known to enforce public support for the Prime Minister and PNC with savage bashings.

"So I and many others fail to understand where Mr O'Neill's confidence is coming from."

Sir Mekere said that candidates and people all over the country were interpreting Mr O'Neill's confidence as a danger sign.

"People are concerned. They are concerned about the Governor of the central bank not answering their questions regarding the highjacking of the container of millions of kina notes which are now in circulation and suspected of being used for vote-buying.

People are concerned about the silence of the Chief Electoral Commissioner on many issues. They are concerned about the secrecy surrounding the printing of the ballot papers offshore by a company allegedly with connections to Indonesian cronies of members of PNC, and allegedly at a price far higher than other tenderers.

People are concerned about the number of ballot papers that have been printed and whether there are duplicates.

People are concerned when they hear reports of ballot papers already appearing in certain provinces.

People are concerned about the logistical arrangements for the election and the award of the helicopter contract, allegedly at a price far higher than other tenderers and to a company with political connections.

People are concerned about the choice of a number of returning officers with known political allegiances.

People are concerned about the security of boxes and ballot papers with mobile polling and whether one day polling will be sufficient time in certain areas to enable all people to vote.

People are concerned when they hear from Electoral Commission staff that the Chief Secretary, Isaac Lupari, is trying to micro-manage Electoral Commission operations.

People are concerned when they see photos of Mr Lupari, a public servant, on the campaign trail with the Prime Minister. Mr Lupari is also chair of the election organising committee and in charge of funding the police and Electoral Commission operations.

Sir Mekere said it was essential for the future of the nation and for parliamentary democracy that this election is free and fair and that the people's will is expressed fully and accurately by the candidates who succeed.

All institutions and people involved in the election and the election of Prime Minister must be allowed to do their work honestly, impartially and free from influence and intimidation. This includes the Electoral Commission and its officers, police, the Defence Force, the Registrar of Political Parties, the officers of Parliament, and the new MPs.

"Papua New Guinea's parliamentary democracy and people's Constitutional rights and freedoms have been eroded in the past five years. The laws of the land and our institutions of state have been twisted, ignored and subverted," Sir Mekere said.

"Freedom of speech and freedom of movement and association have been curtailed through fanciful interpretations of the law by the authorities, and if that fails, by bashings and intimidation.

"Enough is enough. This election is Papua New Guinea's last chance to prevent further undermining of our parliamentary democracy and our rights and freedoms."