



## PRESS RELEASE

### **Apia, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2025 – *Samoans must be allowed to freely exercise their civil and political rights.***

As Samoa heads towards the general election on 29 August 2025, the Office urges all individuals and political actors to respect the rights of Samoans to freedom of expression and political participation.

The right to take part in public affairs, including the right to vote and to stand for election, is at the core of democratic governments that reflect the will of the people. These rights are also linked to many other human rights, including the rights to freedom from discrimination; freedom of opinion and expression; freedom of association, and freedom of movement.

The right to freedom of opinion and expression is also intrinsically linked to a free, fair and independent press. When journalists are intimidated and fear for their safety, Samoa's democratic institutions are weakened, and citizens are unable to hold those in power accountable for their actions.

The rights to freedom of speech, expression, assembly, and association are enshrined in Samoa's Constitution at article 13(1), which provides:

*All citizens of Samoa shall have the right:*

- a) To freedom of speech and expression;*
- b) To assemble peaceably and without arms;*
- c) To form associations or unions; and*
- d) To move freely throughout Samoa and to reside in any part thereof.*

These Constitutional provisions codify international human rights law, such as article 19 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which states:

*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*

Samoa is also a party to the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR), which enshrines the rights to freedom of opinion and expression (article 19), of peaceful assembly

(article 21), to freedom of association (article 22), and to freely choose representatives and vote in elections (article 25).

As the elections draw closer, the Office will continue to advocate for the rights of all Samoans to freely exercise their right to take part in public affairs and for the media to operate without fear or favour, to ensure democratic outcomes for all.

As Samoa's National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), the Office is required, pursuant to section 33 of the *Ombudsman Act 2013*, to monitor and promote compliance with international and domestic human rights law. The Office will be publishing its State of Human Rights Report later this year, which will focus on the topic: *Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in the Context of Elections*. We invite members of the public including individuals, businesses and non-government organisations to make submissions on this topic via our survey at the links below.

**English:** [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScK42\\_-1ua4vEo4MFdnoj\\_Cv8TNYjXDyVEYWRNPEj\\_F6NRL-w/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScK42_-1ua4vEo4MFdnoj_Cv8TNYjXDyVEYWRNPEj_F6NRL-w/viewform)

**Samoan:** [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdR5OlX1qziG-V9Vq\\_40rlFtkwNK4xkJebB4QGQQmX3VhDQjA/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdR5OlX1qziG-V9Vq_40rlFtkwNK4xkJebB4QGQQmX3VhDQjA/viewform)

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