

Australia rips Fijian president's actions

by UPI

SUVA, Fiji -- The Australia government has condemned the Fijian president's decision to annul the country's constitution and appoint himself head of the island country.

In addition, President Ratu Josefa Iloilo fired Fiji's judges and magistrates, including the three jurists who determined the appointment of Commodore Frank Bainimarama's interim government after a 2006 coup was illegal, the Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported Friday.

In a televised announcement, Iloilo said, "I hereby confirm I have abrogated the 1997 constitution and appointed myself as head of state in the new order."

"The Australian government strongly condemns (the) abrogation of the constitution in Fiji and calls upon the president to take the opportunity of (Thursday's) Court of Appeal decision to take Fiji forward and not backwards," Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's office said.

The court ruled elections should be held as soon as possible, a move Rudd said "is the right course for Fiji and the only way forward for the people of Fiji."

Bainimarama, who stepped down after the court announced its ruling, told the Australian broadcaster Iloilo decided on his own to annul the constitution.

"I explained to him to result of the court case but I guess him came up with it up on his own," he said.

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