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Our Reference: AK 313/15- c.13(e)

MEDIA RELEASE

COMPLETION OF CRIMINAL PROSECUTION OF TUPOU COLLEGE STUDENTS FOR DAMAGE OF A DWELLING-HOUSE IN TOFOA

17 April 2015

- 1 The Attorney General's Office wishes to announce the completion, on Thursday 16 April 2015, of the prosecution in the Supreme Court of Tupou College students who were charged with various criminal charges arising from the attack and damage caused to a family dwelling-house in Tofoa in July 2013.
- 2 A total of 151 students were actually charged and prosecuted by the Crown. Of those accused persons, 127 accused persons were charged and convicted in the Magistrate's Court for minor offences, and only the twenty-four (24) accused persons charged with the more serious offences were committed to the Supreme Court.
- 3 The criminal prosecution had arisen from the incident that took place on 18 July 2013 where all the accused travelled from Tupou College late that night, and attacked and damaged a family dwelling-house in Tofoa, which was known to be frequented by both students and ex- students of Tonga College. All the students caused serious damage to the residence and some students physically attacked some occupants of the dwelling-house. One occupant received grievous injuries, which he fortunately recovered from. Another sustained serious bodily injuries, and also recovered.
- 4 All of the 24 accused persons who were prosecuted in the Supreme Court had entered the dwelling-house during the attack.

- 5 They all pleaded guilty to their charges on various dates in March 2015.
- 6 One accused was charged and convicted of rioters damaging building and attempted serious arson, and was sentenced to 4½ years imprisonment, with 18 months (1 year and 6 months) suspended on conditions, and therefore requiring him to serve an actual imprisonment sentence of 3 years.
- 7 Two accused were charged and convicted of riotous assembly, serious housebreaking and causing grievous harm, and were sentenced to 4½ years imprisonment, with 21 months (1 year and 9 months) suspended on conditions, and therefore requiring him to serve an actual imprisonment sentence of 2 years and 9 months.
- 8 Three accused were charged and convicted of riotous assembly, serious housebreaking and causing serious bodily harm, and were sentenced to 2½ imprisonment, which were all fully suspended on condition that two accused undertake 120 hours of community work, and one accused undertake 90 hours of community work.
- 9 Fifteen (15) accused were convicted of rioters damaging building, and all were sentenced to 2 years imprisonment, which were all fully suspended on condition that one accused undertake 65 hours of community work, and the other 14 accused are to undertake 85 hours of community work.
- 10 Three (3) accused persons were charged and convicted of simple housebreaking, but they were discharged without conviction on the condition that they each pay \$200 compensation to the owner of the residence damaged.
- 11 In delivering its sentencing remarks, the Supreme Court warned that these criminal behaviour involving school students should never happen again in Tonga, and if it does the sentencing of those individuals by the Courts may be more severe.

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