

IN THE HIGH COURT OF FIJI
AT LAUTOKA
MISCELLANEOUS JURISDICTION

CRIMINAL MISCELLANEOUS CASE NO: HAM 77 OF 2014

BETWEEN : KALIVERETI JOKIMI

Applicant

AND : STATE

Respondent

Counsel : Mr. Kitione Vuataki for the Applicant
Mr. Josaia B. Niudamu for Respondent

Date of Hearing : 17 February 2015

Date of Ruling : 26 February 2015

RULING

1. This is an application for permanent stay of proceedings.
2. The applicant was charged before the Magistrate Court of Nadi with another with one count of Conspiracy to commit a felony, 2nd count of Larceny by servant, 3rd of Robbery with violence and 4th of Giving false information to a public servant namely a police officer.
3. This application was filed on 25th April 2014. The grounds for application are:
 - (i) Post charge delay and inordinate delay
4. This is his first stay application to this Court.
5. Both parties have filed written submissions. I have carefully considered those.
6. The principles for stay of prosecution are settled in Fiji. In *Mohammed Sharif Sahim v. State*[2007] FCA 17/07, the Court of Appeal when reviewing the law on criminal trial delay held that:

“...it was well settled since *Apaitia Seru and Anthony Fredrick Stevens v. The State* *Crim. App. AAU 0041/42 of 1995 S* that where the delay was unreasonable, prejudice to the accused could be presumed. This court in that case adopted the approach of the majority of the Supreme Court of Canada in *R v. Morgan* [1992] 1SCR and New Zealand court of appeal in *Martin v. District Court at Tauranga* [1995] 2 NZLR 419 that stated:

“The general approach to a determination as to whether the right has been denied is not the application of a mathematical or administrative formula but rather by a judicial determination balancing the interests which the section is designed to protect against factors which either inevitably lead to delay or are otherwise the cause of the delay. As I noted in *Smith (R v Smith (1989) 52 CCC (3D) 97)*, (I)it is axiomatic that some delay is inevitable. The question is, at which point does the delay become unreasonable? ...While the court has at times indicated otherwise, it is now accepted that the factors to be considered in analyzing how long is too long may be listed as follows:

- (i) The length of delay
- (ii) Waiver of time periods
- (iii) The reasons for the delay, including
 - (a) Inherent time requirements of the case;
 - (b) Actions of the accused;
 - (c) Actions of the Crown;
 - (d) Limits on institutional resources, and
 - (e) Other reasons for the delay, and
- (iv) Prejudice to the accused.”

7. In *Johnson v State* [2010] FJHC 356;HAM 177.2010 (23 August 2010), Hon. Mr. Justice D. Goundar stated:

“...The circumstances in which abuse of process may arise are varied. In *R v Derby Crown Court, exp Brooks* [1984] Cr. App. R.164, Sir Roger Ormrod identified two circumstances in which abuse of process may arise:

“...It may be abuse of process if either

- (a) The prosecution have manipulated or misused the process of the court so as to deprive the defendant of a protection provided by law or to take unfair advantage of a technicality, or
- (b) On the balance of probability the defendant had been, or will be, prejudiced in the prosecution of or conduct of his defence by delay on the part of the prosecution which is unjustifiable: for example, not due to the complexity of the inquiry and preparation of the prosecution case, or to the action of the defendant or his co-accused or to genuine difficulty in effecting service.”

8. His lordship further quoted Justice Pain's remarks from State v Rokotuiwai [1998] FJHC 196 identifying the factors which needs to be considered in deciding whether delay is reasonable or not:

".. The length of the delay, the reasons for the delay, the actions of the defendant, the actions of the prosecutor, availability of legal and judicial resources, the nature of the charge and prejudice to the defendant may be relevant."

9. Hon. Mr. Justice Paul Madigan in Tafizal Rahiman v State [2011] FJHC 298 at paragraph 7 stated that:

"The facts to be considered when assessing whether delay is unreasonable or not are expounded in the Privy Council decision in Flowers v The Queen [2007] WLR 2396. The board held that the Court should take into account:

- (i) The length of delay;*
- (ii) The reason for delay;*
- (iii) Whether or not the defendant has asserted his rights to a speedy trial; and*
- (iv) The extent of prejudice."*

Stay in this case was refused even though the delay was 5 years because they were not brought to court which was a system failure and not an unreasonable delay.

10. The state in their submissions has given the chronological order of events at the Magistrate Court. The applicant at the time of the hearing admitted the correctness of those events.

- (i) Accordingly the case was fixed for hearing on four dates. On 2.5.2011 the first hearing date the learned Magistrate was on leave.
- (ii) On second hearing date on 17.2.2012 applicant's counsel moved for a date as he was retained recently.
- (iii) On 14.6.2012 the case was to be taken up for voir-dire hearing. The Resident Magistrate was not available on that day as he was attending a conference.
- (iv) The fourth hearing date was on 19.8.2013. Again the applicant's counsel moved for a date as he was not ready to proceed with trial.
- (v) The case was not taken up for hearing as this stay application was pending. After this stay application was filed, time was moved till 6.10.2014 to file a copy record.

11. The applicant has failed to show on balance of probabilities that due to delay he would suffer serious prejudice to the extent that no trial could be held.

12. When the ruling of this case is given, the case could be fixed for voir-dire hearing.

13. In *Nalawa v State* CAV 0002/09 (13 August 2010) the Supreme Court of Fiji laid down the following principles may now be stated as basic to common law.
- “(i) even where delay is unjustifiable a permanent stay is the exception and not the rule*
 - (ii) where there is no fault on the part of prosecution, very rarely will a stay be granted.*
 - (iii) No stay should be granted in the absence of any serious prejudice to the defence so that no fair trial can be held and ;*
 - (v) On the issue of prejudice, the trial court has process which can deal with the admissibility of evidence if it can be shown there is prejudice to an accused as a result of delay*
14. A stay proceeding is an exceptional remedy, and will only be used if other remedies are available to deal with the justice of the case. Considering all above, the delay in this case is not unreasonable. The applicant had contributed to the delay.
15. Applying the above principles, I do not find merit in any of the ground on which the application for stay is founded. The application for permanent stay of the prosecution is, accordingly, disallowed and dismissed.
16. Considering the date of filing of the charge, I direct the learned Magistrate to give priority to this case and conclude this matter within 6 months from the next mention date in Magistrate Court. Further I request both parties to co-operate with the learned Magistrate to conclude this matter within that time frame.
17. Copy of this ruling to be sent to the learned Magistrate.




Sudharshana De Silva
JUDGE

At Lautoka
26th February 2015

Solicitors: **Vuataki Law Barristers and Solicitors for the Applicant**
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for Respondent