

IN THE HIGH COURT OF FIJI

AT LABASA

CRIMINAL JURISDICTION

Criminal Case No. HAC 67 of 2025

THE STATE

-v-

RATU OSEA VEREKAWA

**Counsel: Mr. N. Kumar for the State
Ms. V. Kirti for the Accused**

Sentencing Hearing: 24 October 2025

Date of Sentence: 14 November 2025

SENTENCE

1. **Mr. Verekawa**, you have pleaded guilty to charges of burglary, theft, and serious assault (resisting arrest). You have agreed that you entered Ms. Katalaina Kuilamu's home as a trespasser and stole various items, including a 55-inch Hisence TV, with an estimated total value of more than \$1,500. Having attempted to sell the TV, you left it at a camp house, from where it was later recovered by the police. On 6 September 2025, you attempted to flee as the police raided your home. In the course of your arrest, you pushed PC Raikivi in an attempt to escape, and continued to aggressively resist arrest. It took nearly 30 minutes to calm and handcuff you.
2. On 24 October 2025, based on these admitted facts, you unequivocally and voluntarily accepted responsibility for your wrongdoing. I found you guilty as charged and convicted you accordingly.

Prosecution Sentencing Submissions

3. The prosecution has filed written sentencing submissions citing the relevant guideline judgment, and setting out the current sentencing practice for burglary and theft. Based on this current practice, the prosecution submitted that the level of harm is “low”, and urged this Court to take a starting point of 1 years’ imprisonment, with a range of 6 months to 3 years’ imprisonment.
4. The prosecution submit that the accepted range for serious assault is 6 to 9 months’ imprisonment, the statutory maximum being 5 years’ imprisonment.
5. The prosecution has also brought to the Court’s attention the fact that you were convicted of burglary and theft last year and sentenced, on 22 February 2024, to 8 months’ and 25 days’ imprisonment.

Defence Sentencing Submissions

6. Defence counsel have made written and oral submissions on your behalf. You are a 27-year-old married father of four young children. You are the sole breadwinner for your family through farming. Ms. Kirti emphasised several factors that reduce the seriousness of your offending. Most importantly, you have saved the Court’s time and resources by pleading guilty at the earliest opportunity. You are said to be remorseful.
7. I am reminded that a sentencing court must not impose a more serious sentence unless it is satisfied that a lesser sentence will not meet the statutory objectives of sentencing, and sentences of imprisonment should be regarded as the sanction of last resort.

Analysis and disposal

8. Burglary is a serious offence. It can have significant psychological, emotional and financial effects on victims. Everyone should feel secure in their own homes.
9. Having regard to all the circumstances of this case, I consider that the appropriate aggregate sentence for the counts of burglary and theft is 12 months’ imprisonment. I reduce your sentence by one third to give you full

credit for your early guilty pleas, resulting in an aggregate sentence of 8 months' imprisonment. I reduce your sentence by a further 3 months to reflect the time you have spent in custody since your arrest on 6 September 2025. In the result, the aggregate sentence for your offending reflected in counts one and two is 5 months' imprisonment.

10. In relation to count three, I am compelled to record that police officers put themselves in daily danger in service of the public, and they are entitled to the full protection of the law. A clear message must be sent that those who would seek to resist lawful arrest can expect condign punishment. In my view, your separate offending reflected in count three warrants a consecutive sentence of 6 months' imprisonment, reduced to 4 months' imprisonment to reflect your early guilty plea.
11. The suspension or partial suspension of your sentence is not warranted in all the circumstances of this case.
12. Mr. Verekawa, for the reasons I have explained, the sentence I impose is:
 - (i) Counts one and two – 5 months' imprisonment.
 - (ii) Count three – 4 months' imprisonment consecutive.
13. 30 days to appeal to the Court of Appeal.



A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized initial 'W' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line.

Hon Mr. Justice Burney

At Labasa
14 November 2025

Solicitors:
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for the State
Office of the Legal Aid Commission for the Accused