

# ATTORNEY GENERAL'S CHAMBERS MINISTRY OF LEGAL AFFAIRS

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### STATEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA

The Government of Guyana was informed that **Rickford Burke**, a Guyanese residing in Brooklyn, New York, lodged a formal complaint with a Department within the Federal Bureau of Investigations alleging that the Government of Guyana is persecuting him [*or words to this effect as we have not seen the complaint*]. **Mr. Burke** also alleged in his report that the Government of Guyana sent officers of the Guyana Police Force to his home in Brooklyn, New York, to kidnap him.

The Government of Guyana is pleased that **Mr. Burke** has engaged the law enforcement agencies in the United States on this matter as the same has received the attention of the law enforcement agencies in Guyana and the matter is currently before courts of Guyana.

In consequence, by a letter dated July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the Government of Guyana responded to this report refuting the allegations of **Mr. Burke** as absolutely false and wholly unfounded and considers them to constitute a malicious attack on the integrity, reputation, good name and international standing of the Government of Guyana. This letter was addressed to the Desk Officer for Guyana, U.S. Department of State and copied to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, a number of

functionaries within the U.S. Department of State, the Department of Justice, Congressman Hakeem Jeffries, and the United States Ambassador to Guyana.

In the aforementioned letter, the Government of Guyana apprised the US Officials of the following information:

1. using the social platform of his Facebook Page, **Mr. Burke** has been, *inter alia*, libelling, maligning and attacking the reputation, goodwill and good name of a number of business entities in Guyana, under the pretext that he is protecting consumers and customers of these business entities from alleged abuse, exploitation and sharp practices by these business entities;
2. while conducting these public onslaughts of these business entities, **Mr. Burke** privately and surreptitiously inboxes them on the same Facebook platform, or communicates with them via telephone, offering to cease these attacks against their businesses in exchange for monetary payments which he sends his servants and/or agents in Guyana to uplift from the business entities;
3. the owner of one of these business entities reported this criminal extortion conspiratorial plot of **Mr. Burke** to the Guyana Police Force and a sting operation was carried out by Police Officers;
4. marked monetary bills were paid over to one of **Mr. Burke**'s servants and/or agents whom he directed to uplift from the owner of the said business entity and in the course thereof two persons were arrested by the Guyana Police Force;
5. one of the arrested persons confessed in writing implicating **Mr. Burke** as the mastermind of the operation;
6. in consequence thereof and after a thorough investigation by members of the Guyana Police Force and based upon legal advice received from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, an independent constitutional office,

**Mr. Burke** and the persons were charged with two counts of the following extortion offence:

- a. Conspiracy to Commit a Felony, Contrary to Section 33 of the Criminal Law (Offences) Act, Chapter 8:01 committed on Afras Mohamed which occurred between the 27th day of August, 2022 and the 23rd day of September 2022; and
7. these charges are pending before a Magistrate in the District in which the offences were allegedly committed;
8. the learned Magistrate, upon an examination of the charges, issued a summons to be served upon **Mr. Burke** by the Guyana Police Force, authorised by the relevant criminal statute to do so, so that **Mr. Burke** is notified of the date and time of the hearing of the said charge and to permit him the opportunity to answer the charges;
9. in order to serve the said summons on **Mr. Burke**, a duly authorised officer of the Guyana Police Force travelled to New York and retained the services of a licensed Legal Process Server in New York, duly authorised to serve such documents, to effect service of the document on **Mr. Burke** this was done;
10. **Mr. Burke** accepted service of the documents from the said licensed Legal Process Server on the stairs of his premises in Brooklyn, New York and this entire process was video recorded by the Police Officer from the Guyana Police Force who was standing over 100 feet away across the street from **Mr. Burke's** premises where the service was effected; and
11. the said legal proceedings are still pending before the Courts of Guyana.

From the above narrative, it is excruciatingly clear that the Government of Guyana played no part whatsoever in the aforementioned extortion imbroglio. It is simply a citizen of Guyana taking such legal steps necessary and available to him under the

laws of and Constitution of Guyana, to protect himself and his business from what he considers to be criminal conduct on the part of **Mr. Burke**.

Further, the Guyana Police Force, the principal law enforcement agency of the State, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Judiciary, all constitutional independent agencies, have simply discharged their constitutional and legal duties which devolve upon them by the laws and Constitution of Guyana.

The Government of Guyana has invited the Federal Bureau of Investigation to thoroughly investigate the complaint made by **Mr. Burke** and if it is found that it is baseless, false and malicious, which the Government of Guyana believes it is, we hereby request that the Federal Bureau of Investigation take the appropriate actions against **Mr. Burke** for filing such false and malicious reports.

The Government of Guyana views this matter very seriously and is already in consultation with lawyers in the United States of America seeking the appropriate legal advice with a view of pursuing legal redress against **Mr. Burke**.

On Friday, August 9, 2024, the Guyana Police Force issued a public statement outlining the progress and status of some of the criminal charges pending before the Magistrates' Court. The statement detailed that the main witness in the matter has implicated **Mr. Burke** in the criminal extortion conspiracy. The matter has been adjourned to September 13, 2024 for the continuation of cross-examination of the main witness.

It must be emphasised that while **Mr. Burke** is lodging concocted and baseless complaints against the Government of Guyana with the law enforcement agencies in the U.S., at the same time, through lawyers, he has filed civil proceedings in the courts of Guyana designed to prevent the hearing and determination of the criminal charges instituted against him. One would have expected him to willingly appear before the criminal courts in order to vindicate his innocence rather than attempt to avoid those proceedings.

Additionally, the Government of Guyana has lodged a comprehensive report against **Mr. Burke** with the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. State Department,

the Federal Bureau of Investigations and other agencies within the U.S. regarding his utterances and publications on the social media of criminal incitements, exciting racial hostilities and widespread violence against different ethnic groups of the country, domestic terrorism and wanton, malicious and defamatory attacks on the character and reputation of hundreds of outstanding Guyanese. These authorities have been invited to explore all mutual legal facilities available in ensuring that these allegations are fully investigated and the relevant criminal proceedings instituted in both jurisdictions in order to ensure that justice is done in accordance with law.

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