
MEDIA RELEASE

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T&T Chamber calls for collaboration and decisive action on crime

For several years, citizens of Trinidad and Tobago have been crying out for the authorities and national leaders to address a sense of creeping anarchy. As a nation, our worst fears are now being realised, and the editorial of one newspaper on Sunday July 21st served as an unvarnished expression of frustration. The Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce fully supports these sentiments which highlights that the time for assertive action on crime is now.

Our country is under attack from criminal elements fighting for turf. The turf is multi-faceted – trafficking of guns and ammunition, drugs and humans, alongside rivalry for state contracts and “territory”. Our country is out of control, but we cannot simply throw up our hands and expect others to correct the situation.

The T&T Chamber is part of a private sector-led group which has been working closely with the leadership of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, contributing both funds and executive time to anti-crime efforts. We recognise that we must all work together to address the issue of crime. A comprehensive plan needs to be developed, and we suggest that a key element might be to have a singularly dedicated Minister of National Security. This will allow focus at the Cabinet level to be placed on the process of the said plan and on issues which the Commissioner of Police has identified as critical.

Finding a solution to crime would need to involve diverse elements of society, including the Judiciary, Cabinet, the Opposition, Labour and Private Sector Organisations. We must also examine what is lacking legislatively that prevents the police from effectively utilising the anti-gang law and other relevant pieces of legislation.

It has been reported that following the ‘week of murders’ over 100 persons have been arrested and high-powered firearms seized. This is laudable, but we cannot continue to be reactionary. A calculated, consistent approach is needed, employing daily crisis tactics to address the situation.

Over a decade ago, the T&T Chamber was part of a private sector group which submitted to Government a 40-point plan to address crime. Several of our proposals remain relevant today, and we are prepared at this time to join with the government to review and assist with implementation of elements of that plan which are in the best interest of our country. We also look forward to working with other business service organisations in this effort. Trinidad and Tobago simply must not be allowed to descend to a point of no return. Time is of the essence, and the time is now.

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