



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs

MEDIA RELEASE

STATEMENT ON ILLEGAL CROSSINGS FROM VENEZUELA

PORT OF SPAIN: 27TH NOVEMBER, 2020

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is a sovereign nation that is doing its utmost to overcome a pandemic that remains a clear and present danger to the globe. As a small-island state, we have compassionately taken the unprecedented step of officially registering and facilitating over 16,000 migrants from Venezuela to live and work in Trinidad and Tobago. This hospitality continues even as our economy faces significant challenges that have affected all our people. Everywhere you go in Trinidad and Tobago you find our Venezuelan brothers and sisters living, working, being educated, and engaging fully with our health care system and other sectors. We assert that this reality must be well known and acknowledged by all responsible parties.

There is another reality affecting our sovereign nation, and that is the flagrant disregard for our nation's borders by drug runners, gun runners, human traffickers, others linked to organised crime in South America, and specifically by mercenaries who contribute to the exploitation of women and children and profit directly from the facilitation of illegal crossings. These exploiters do not seek the genuine interest of those they profit from, and they have no qualms about adjusting their strategies to take advantage of any loopholes that may be created by others.

In the current circumstances our nation simply cannot open its borders or reduce protections for the health and welfare of our people. Even developed nations with far greater resources face major challenges dealing with crossings of their borders, and no nation accepts non-nationals without due process.

Trinidad and Tobago has always been a good neighbour and hospitable land, and this will not change. We have neither inclination to be drawn into the internal political contests of other countries, nor are we disposed to respond to their various participants. Our local courts are now engaged in consideration of a recent situation involving the crossing of our borders by a boat transporting both adults and minors. We await the full determination of this matter within our legal system and reserve the right to make appropriate adjustments in accordance with the law and in pursuit of the best interests of our nation.

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