

Buxton is a Terror Camp by Andaiye David Hinds Eusi Kwayana

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Dear Editor,

The willful and malicious setting on fire of a human body is an aggravated crime against humanity. Treating women as a prize of armed conquest, either by rape or attempted rape, is an especially odious crime against the mothers of the human race and against humanity. Both these offences were carried out recently at Non Pareil, East Coast, Demerara. The reports so far are not very clear, but what is already clear is that most of those assaulted were Indian Guyanese.

In the past, each of us has made statements condemning African Guyanese atrocities against Indian Guyanese, and we condemn them even more strongly now, as the violence becomes more brutal.

A similar though less brutal violence has begun to spread to African Guyanese victims. We warned before that in the end, crime and violence know no race. This is coming to pass. In recent weeks the violence has taken on added proportions as African Guyanese are being targeted. While it is difficult to distinguish naked crime from political violence, we think that there is a political element in all of this.

Today, African families and communities are also becoming victims of the madness that is consuming Guyana. And according to news reports and eyewitnesses, a few Indian Guyanese criminals are operating out of Buxton under the leadership of their African Guyanese counterparts.

Illegal weapons are playing a large part in the upsurge of brutal violence. Only the government of the country can have final and operational responsibility for the presence of illegal weapons among a population. After all is said and done, these weapons have crossed borders or passed through ports to enter Guyana. The government has official custody of these transit centres.

Yet in spite of the progressive increase in gun-related crimes, the statute books remain as they were. There are provisions which are not being invoked. In fact, the public has no evidence that the police know for certain what ammunition or what weapons were used on a particular occasion. If they do, they are silent about these details, which can help the public to make sense of the incidents. This part of the statement focuses on the government, not because those signing it have any doubt of the anti-government direction of the crimes. It has that focus because the government and its agencies can take certain actions:

1. There must be arms control regulations crafted to suit the present situation.
2. An expert voice from the law enforcement agencies must frequently address the offenders in the hearing of the nation. Law enforcers can offer options to those who know they are offenders, including the option of a fair trial under international observation.
3. Through the law and the parliament, if the situation does not improve, the Government should admit that it is out of hand. After meaningful consultations with opposition forces and civil society, it should apply standard coercive regulations necessary to prevent the country from sliding knowingly into the abyss.

These are the short-term actions we recommend.

The PPP has erred badly in the way it has governed since 1992, which has impacted negatively on

almost all sectors of the society, but in particular ways, most negatively on the already demoralized African Guyanese community. In relation to the violence perpetrated by the Black Clothes against African Guyanese, its failure to act has fueled the claim of an Indian Guyanese conspiracy against African Guyanese.

We have long called for power sharing as one of the answers to our problems. We still believe this to be essential. But we distance ourselves unequivocally from any scheme aimed at arriving at power sharing as a result of the calculated escalation of violence. There are at least three reasons why we must oppose the view held by some African Guyanese extremists that violence is pushing or will push the PPP away from its obstruction of peaceful constitutional remedies:

First, it is immoral. Why should innocent people have to endure daily terror and rape and young people be turned into child-soldiers and spies in order to bring a government to its senses?

Second, it cannot hold water, since the more the violence, the more the PPP claims that there is no crisis in the country.

Third, the naked violence and inter-ethnic violence have already created a climate in which people are unwilling to trust one another and thus will be unwilling to seriously address sharing of power, which is so essential for human development in Guyana. Because of this we have an additional reason for opposing the present violence. If the situation continues, by the time we get to power sharing there will be no power to share, as political parties would be prisoners of violent extremists, criminals, and drug lords.

Today Buxton is a terror camp in which villagers have become prisoners. The psychological, social and cultural damage being done to that village surpasses anything since slavery, including the dreaded 1960s. Both the PPP and the PNC must take full responsibility for that deterioration, for it is their zero sum political behavior that paved the way for the boldness of the criminal and other extreme elements who now run things there. We warn that if the situation is not brought under control, more Buxtons will emerge overnight.

The PNC, by not publicly breaking with those who have been pushing Black supremacy and violence and excusing murder, rape, and mayhem as revolution, has contributed in no small way to the crisis.

This is no longer simply about politics and "marginalization", it is about the destruction of the nation in the name of saving the nation or under the guise of seeking power for African Guyanese.

We therefore appeal to all Guyanese who still have the courage to speak out, to do so with one strong voice. We urge the PPP and the PNC to separately and together come off their partisan horses while it is still possible to do so and help to save Guyana. As African Guyanese we urge Black People who are supporting the violence to stop confusing naked terror with our historical quest for freedom; and we urge Black people who mutter quietly that they oppose the violence to say so in a loud voice, because your public silence is encouraging the perpetrators of the violence and adding insult to the injury caused to the victims of the violence. Any freedom that any group seeks through the rape and murder of its fellow citizens, including some of its own race, can never be real freedom.