

HUMAN RIGHTS IN GUYANA

UPR Pre-Session

February 2025

INTRODUCTION

- Guyana's multiethnic population, comprised of mainly African and East descendants, primarily reside on the coastland of the country.
- Historical patterns of ethnic zebraification persist in the composition of villages.
- Ethno-political rivalry and socio-economic inequalities akin to apartheid severely disadvantage the development of African Guyanese.

INTRODUCTION

- IDPADA-G is an umbrella for 78 community-based organisations spanning six of the ten geographical regions of the country.
- IDPADA-G answered the call of the decade and seeks to advocate for, and engineer, institutional and legal transformation in Guyana

BACKGROUND – STATE CONSULTATIONS

IDPADA-G was not invited to State-sponsored consultations

Fifty organisations invited

Thirteen CSOs attended

Situation in Guyana – Participation in Public Affairs

- The current PPP/C government, led by Mohammed Irfaan Ali, improperly uses its parliamentary majority to deny the opposition a fair hearing in the National Assembly.
- Eighty per cent of motions to address issues from their constituencies sent to the Speaker are denied hearings.
- In May 2024, US Congressman Jackson admonished government chaperones about the citizen's right to speak freely as they attempted to choreograph their engagement with residents of a community the government had recently demolished homes and businesses without regard for their rights, including women and children.

Situation in Guyana – Participation in Public Affairs

- *Article 12 states that "Local government by freely elected representatives of the people is an integral part of the democratic organization of the State."*
- The President and Ministers of Government have publicly stated that they will relate directly to the people without reference or deference to their elected representatives.

Situation in Guyana – Protection of the Right to Vote

- Under the current Chairperson, GECOM, an independent commission responsible for conducting and managing elections, has not served the public interest but that of the PPP/C government.
- Disregard the verification of ballots in the GRE 2020 National Recount.

Situation in Guyana – Protection of the Right to Vote

- Allocation of seats in Parliament in relation to the joinder parties has not followed established procedures, resulting in the Deputy Speaker squatting in the seat for the past year.
- Refusal to conduct internal reviews and improve the conduct of elections based on the recommendations of international observers given the myriad problems marred the GRE 2020.

Situation in Guyana – Racial Discrimination (Employment)

- Covert discriminatory practices in the public service.
- Promotions within the public sector are no longer based on meritocracy.
- A punitive approach to public officials who resist following racially motivated instructions that favour Indian Guyanese and negatively affect African Guyanese.

Situation in Guyana - Racial Discrimination (Land Allocation)

- Bold actions that indicate non-recognition of rights.
- African Guyanese were violently and destructively evicted from lands they had occupied for housing, commercial and agricultural purposes for decades under the pretext that lands were required for road construction.
- Land allocation for residential and commercial purposes is not on equal footing for all ethnic groups.

Update on UPR Recommendations Since 2020

- The GOG failed to appoint the Chancellor and Chief Justice of the Judiciary, who have been acting for seven years.
- Where laws have been enacted as recommended, these are not being enforced. FPIC and provisions of the Environmental Protection Act.

Update on UPR Recommendations Since 2020

- The ERC has been dysfunctional; complaints filed are neither acknowledged nor answered.
- The GOG 's inability to establish the Human Rights Commission continues to impede the rights of citizens to proper redress of violations and enjoyment of rights

Recommendation

Allow participation in Public Affairs

- Equally recognise, meaningfully engage and properly fund all locally elected bodies in decision-making, policy planning, development and on all matters, affecting communities.
- Recognise the right of citizens to freedom of speech and desist from stymieing dissenting voices.
- Respect the right to participate in public affairs.

Recommendation

Protect the Right to Vote

- GOG must take immediate action to
- Implement the recommendations of international observers of the GRE 2020.
- Encourage the GECOM to conduct an internal review and improve the conduct of elections.
- Ensure the integrity of the upcoming 2025 elections by supporting biometric voter identification.

Recommendations Address Racial Discrimination

- GoG should conduct Ethnic Disparity Assessments to establish the comparative state of the ethnic groups in Guyana and determine the actions required to achieve equity and address racial discrimination.
- Human Rights Commission be implemented to monitor and address racial discrimination in all areas of society including hiring, award of contracts, etc

Recommendation Address Racial Discrimination

- Urgently review and launch a process for the legal reform of the anachronistic legal regime as called for in the UN's declaration of the decade to reflect the goals of a free and equitable society and allow greater scope for redress.

CONCLUSION

- The government must cogently address discriminatory practices or equitable economic development based on data derived from ethnic disparity assessments.
- The need for local institutional and legal transformation is imperative.
- Civil society is appreciative for this forum to share the situation of human rights in Guyana and demand the respect of and protection of the rights of all Guyanese

Thank you

From all the members of the IDPADA-G Coordinating Council

Vincent Alexander

Olive Sampson

Lance Carberry

Norman Ng-A-Qui

Reginald Daniels

Royston Peters

Miryom Levi

Deon Abrams