



Permanent Mission of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana to the  
United Nations office and Other International Organisations at  
Geneva

Note No.: 01/2021

The Permanent Mission of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the Special Procedures Branch of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and, with reference to the communication of November 9, 2020 from Ms. Beatriz Balbin, Chief of the Special Procedures Branch, has the honour to submit herewith a response from the Government of Guyana to the Joint Urgent Appeal issued by several Special Procedures mandate holders.

The Permanent Mission of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations at Geneva, avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Special Procedures Branch of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the assurances of its highest consideration.



Geneva, January 5, 2021

Special Procedures Branch, OHCHR  
Geneva

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**Government of Guyana Response to the Joint Urgent Appeal from Special Procedures Ref UA GUY 1/2020 concerning the allegations of the imminent forced evictions of at least 2000 persons living in an informal settlement in Success, East Coast Demerara, including single women and children.**

Preamble:

The new Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana came into office on August 2nd, 2020, after what are considered historic and unprecedented circumstances, even at the global level, following the March 2nd General and Regional Elections. This followed the successive passage of a No Confidence motion in the National Assembly on December 21, 2018.

Repeated, and documented, efforts by officials in the Guyana Elections Commission and the members of the former Government on March 5th and 13th 2020 to derail the will of the electorate to choose their representatives in accordance with the Guyana Constitution contributed to a five (5) months delay in declaring the results.

These elections were observed by the Commonwealth, the Organization of American States, the European Union, the CARICOM and the Carter Centre and all concluded that March 2nd Elections Day had been conducted in a free, transparent and fair manner.

During the 5 months following these elections, 100 countries represented in the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the Organization of the American States, the European Union and the CARICOM all supported the Guyanese people's efforts to peacefully defend their right to choose their government and to ensure that the legitimate government of Guyana was installed after the recount of all the ballot papers and several court cases to thwart the will of the people.

In the midst of these events, Guyana was also experiencing the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic within its borders.

The People's Progressive Party/ Civic ( PPP/C) was finally declared the winner on August 2nd, 2020 by the Guyana Elections Commission. President Mohamed

Irfaan Ali was sworn in on the same day with the Prime Minister Brigadier (retired) Mark Phillips, the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, Mr. Mohabir Anil Nandlall and the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, Ms. Gail Teixeira. The Cabinet was fully constituted and sworn in on August 5, 2020.

On September 1st, 2020, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly were elected and all Members of Parliament were sworn in. The annual budget for the Year 2020 was passed on September 30, 2020 in the National Assembly.

There are two parties in the official Parliamentary Opposition. The former governing party, A Partnership for National Unity+ Alliance for Change (APNU+AFC Coalition) headed by former President Mr. David Granger, and, a joiner of several small parties which will rotate their representatives in the five year term based on proportionality of votes received. At this time, one of these new small parties, the Liberty and Justice Party, headed by Lenox Schuman is a Member of Parliament who was elected Deputy Speaker. The Leader of the Parliamentary Opposition is Mr. Joseph Harmon, of the APNU+AFC Coalition.

The APNU+AFC Coalition Parliamentary Opposition has refused to accept the results and has declared the PPP/C government illegitimate and has used various situations to incite violence and to encourage breaking of the law and order.

As is their right, the APNU+AFC Coalition has approached the court with two election petitions.

Within weeks of the President being sworn in, the APNU+AFC Coalition used the tragic and brutal murder of two young Afro-Guyanese (somewhere between September 5th-6th 2020) to incite violence, burning and blocking of roads, destroying private property, and attacking and robbing innocent people on the West Coast Berbice, Administrative Region # 5. Movement was cut off with no access to and through Administrative Region # 5 to Administrative Region # 6, no goods or people could move. It took over a week to restore some level of normalcy to the area, however, there have been several more instances of

blocking and burning of the main road in the same area over the months of October and November, 2020.

A third young Indo-Guyanese teenage was also murdered in a neighbouring community on September 9th, 2020, and it is thought this may have been a reprisal killing.

The Government called in the Regional Investigative Management Systems (RIMS) under the CARICOM Implementing Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) to assist with the investigation. Although neither the Regional Security System Team nor the Guyana Police Force have been able to find the primary murder scene, evidence collected point to some level of interference in the early stages of the investigation by the political opposition.

The APNU+AFC Coalition at the same time used its influence in the Guyana Public Service Union to instigate strikes by health workers in October but with little success.

Their strategy also includes encouraging people to squat on lands such as the one that emerged in July 2020 known as the **South Success Backlands** squatting area. This is the area referred to in the Joint Urgent Appeal from the Special Rapporteurs to which this response refers.

### National Housing Programme

Guyana in its 2nd UPR report 2015 (2010-2015) under the PPP/C government stated that:-

*“Guyana remains committed to providing access to affordable housing to all citizens. Guyana’s national housing programme continues to provide subsidized standardized house lots for low and middle income families through the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA)...*

*Through a number of legislative measures as well as Government/commercial banks partnerships, low income households can access loans to build their houses at concessionary rates..*

*By the end of 2013 18,000 households in squatter settlements which emerged over 3 decades were regularized. The Government provided services (access to water, electricity, roads, etc..) and security of tenure with Certificates of Title to Land to regularized squatters.*

*Government is seeking to further extend access to low cost financing for home construction, improve occupancy rates in new housing areas and continue the regularization of squatting areas.*

*One contributing factor to this intense building explosion is the Government's policy to make land available in all the ten (10) Administrative regions for housing, agriculture and new investments."*

*The report went on to point out that "The supply of potable water currently reached in excess of 95 per cent of the population in the coastal areas and 73 per cent in the hinterland areas" and noted that "Guyana had been honoured by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for attaining the targets set as part of Millennium Development Goal 1 and the goal set by the 1996 World Food Summit of halving the absolute number of hungry people by 2015 and improving nutrition. The prevalence of undernourishment had been reduced from 19.1 per cent (1990–1992) to 5.1 per cent (2010 and 2012)."*

Regrettably, during the 5 years under the APNU+AFC Coalition government, the national housing programme was neglected and the number of house lots distributed to low income applicants declined; select and special treatment was given to the ruling party's supporters to access land. The level of corruption in the distribution of state lands to then ruling party elite while the government was in caretaker mode during the 19 months before the election results, is presently the subject of major audit and criminal investigations.

On August 7<sup>th</sup> 2020, less than a week after the government had assumed office, Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, Anil Nandlall, issued a statement indicating that all leases, licences and permissions to occupy public lands which had been granted since December 21, 2018, were to be reviewed. This was the date on which a no confidence vote against the APNU+AFC government had been passed in Parliament, following which, it enjoyed only caretaker status.

It was uncovered that one of the state agencies, the National Industrial and Commercial and Investment Ltd (NICIL), had transferred lands belonging to the

Guyana Sugar Corporation, another state entity, to private entities up to a few days before the election.

As a result of the then government's policies and practices, squatting which had been reduced by 2015, re-emerged, and, in some cases, was actually encouraged by the then government officials to satisfy their frustrated supporters with occupying state and private lands.

The then government also removed the tax concessions and the commercial banking arrangements that helped poor and low income households to acquire house lots and construct their homes prior to 2015.

It also introduced 200 taxes on items formerly VAT free or exempt, including construction materials, electricity and water. There was consequentially a rise in poverty across the country. The government closed 4 sugar estates that led to 7000 people losing their jobs. This impacted on many coastal communities dependent on the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GUYSUCO) for employment and business. Over those 5 years, 30,000 people lost their jobs.

It should be noted the CHPA in 2017 publicly declared that it was relocating 12,000 squatters in the capital city to an area outside of Georgetown. Land was allocated for such re-location but due to the no confidence motion and elections over the period December 2018 to August 2020, the government withheld its implementation as it would have impacted on the majority of their supporters.

The CHPA Board was dissolved by Order in August 2020 after the new Ministry of Housing and Water was sworn in and a new Board appointed.

On assuming office the new government discovered that there are 68,000 applications for house lots pending. The government has re-introduced the National Housing Programme and promised to issue 50,000 house lots in its five year term of office. Within the next year 10,000 applications will be processed. The new government also restored the pre-2015 tax measures that assisted the poor and vulnerable.

**Table 1 - Performance of the Housing Administration and Conveyancing Department**

Activities	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 Jan-Jul	Total
Applications received	4,561	5,168	4,772	4,182	6,356	TBC	25,039
Interview conducted	4,926	5,446	4,927	4,416	6,722	2,211	28,648
Allocations	1,223	2,020	1,131	776	1,301	1,987	8,438
Titles & Transport Processed	2,226	2,212	2,076	1,206	1,061	251	9,032
Titles & Transport Distributed	3,253	4,874	3,498	2,321	2,099	368	16,413

**N.B:** *Of the 1,987 allocations made during the period January 2020 to July 2020, only 251 Transports/Titles were processed. The backlog of applications as of September 2020 now stands at 68,000.*

The “Dream Realised Housing Drive 2020”, was launched by His Excellency President Mohamed Irfaan Ali at the Providence National Stadium on Friday October 16th, 2020 with over 600 people present to receive their titles which had been pending over the last 5 years.

President Ali, a former housing minister under the PPP/C government (2006-2015) who piloted the acceleration of the PPP/C massive housing programme, said his vision is to create opportunities for home ownership that brings communities together and create an environment for unity, prosperity and progress.

*“Housing,” he said. “is not only about the development of house lots but also about empowerment of families and provision of opportunities for them to grow and prosper...It is not wild promises – it is a goal and well thought out process to get there.”*

The President said the promises are not only about accessing housing but also one of affordability and one where citizens will benefit from modern network of infrastructure.

The 2020 Budget passed on September 30, 2020 earmarked billions of dollars to the housing drive to facilitate 5000 applicants being processed and receiving their titles by the end of the year.

The Minister of Housing and Water, Colin Coral, M.P, stated at the launching that:-

*“The Government has already introduced a number of measures, including mortgage interest relief for low and middle-income homeowners as well as increased the limit for low-income loans, and the reversal of VAT on building materials where it was imposed. These are measures geared at giving every eligible citizen increased access and availability to financing for homeownership. It is part of the Government’s continued drive to increase the disposable income of every household which will increase cash in hand and improve living conditions...”*

*Additionally, in keeping with its 2020 work programme, the Ministry of Housing and Water has already started clearing lands and constructing access bridges in several new housing areas.”*

However, the Minister reminded the public that while the Ministry is continuing to work on those measures there is a zero-tolerance approach to squatting. He also emphasised that the Ministry will continue to engage residents to relocate them where necessary and regularise areas where possible.

### **South Success Backlands Squatting Area**

The Government is not aware of who made these allegations to the UN Rapporteurs but the same allegations were made to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in October, 2020.

The Government of Guyana responded to the request of the IACHR with regard to precautionary measures on November 5, 2020. According to the IACHR procedures the accused has a right to know who the accuser is. In that case the applicant to the IACHR, [REDACTED], although using an address in [REDACTED] [REDACTED], USA, resides in Guyana and is not a resident of South Success Backlands. He is known for inciting attacks on social media on the leaders of the PPP/C, now the ruling party.

Mr. [REDACTED] was a director on the Board of the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CHPA), the agency mandated with the responsibility of the National Housing Programme, under the former government from 2016. Mr. [REDACTED] was also Chairman of the Land Allocation Committee of the Board.



The community, referred to as **Success** is a developed structured community, managed by an elected Local Government Authority known as the Better Hope/Success/ La Bonne Intention Neighbourhood Democratic Council, with houses owned by former sugar workers and others dating back several generations.

The backlands of this community are owned by the state owned Guyana Sugar Corporation (GUYSUCO) and were used for scientific research and cultivation of new varieties of sugar until the former government closed the Enmore Sugar Factory and dismissed thousands of workers in 2017. This is the area known as **South Success Backlands**.

It cannot be over-emphasized that drone photographs of the area in dispute show no squatter settlement. In fact, there is no sign of any human habitation in the area until **late July 2020**. Therefore, any claims that people have lived there for a long time is not true. Furthermore, the claim that 4000 people live in the disputed area is also unfounded. ( see drone photographs attached in the Appendices )

Budget 2020 was approved in the National Assembly on September 30, 2020. The two areas of priority were addressing the Covid-19 pandemic and stimulating and turning the economy around with a pro-poor pro-growth approach. The government has promised to create 50,000 jobs by an economic stimulus package with the removal of the 200 taxes introduced by the former government in 2016, diversification of the economy, re-opening the sugar estates, and major transformative infrastructural projects such a deep water harbor, more international hotels, major highways and a new suspension bridge across the Demerara River, one new international bridge between Guyana and Suriname and a major road link between Brazil and Guyana.

These are already being implemented and in different stages of progress.

Consequentially, the Government mandated the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GUYSUCO) to restart operations at the Enmore Sugar Factory in early 2022, and the ongoing work at **South Success Backlands**, East Coast Demerara, is part of the company's efforts to meet its deadline.

The Enmore Sugar Factory is one of the three estates identified to be reopened to restart sugar production. In keeping with the government's mandate to reopen Enmore Sugar Estate, the area referred to as Success Backlands are required by GUYSSUCO for cane cultivation.

Here is a summary of the interventions of the Government and state agencies to address the issue of the **South Success Backlands** squatting community:-

- *2 weeks after being sworn into office, **August 22nd, 2020** - Minister of Housing and Water, the Hon. Collin Croal, M.P., acting on an invitation from the Chairman of the Better Hope/Success/ La Bonne Intention Neighbourhood Council (known as an NDC) (Local Authority Area), Mr. [REDACTED], visited South Success, where it was reported that persons recently moved in to illegally occupy lands in the area.*
- *The Chairman reported that over the past few weeks, persons had been moving into the area in South Success, and illegally building and occupying structures on lands.*
- *Three "wooden structures" were discovered within the sugar cane cultivation area.*
- *Upon reviewing official documents, it was found that the lands being occupied fell under the purview of the National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL) and not the Ministry of Housing of Water nor the Central Housing and Planning Authority.*

*The Chief Executive Officer of the NICIL gave instructions to allow squatters who occupied the three "wooden structures" some additional time to remove their structures. (up to 3 weeks). The smaller arrangements which did not constitute a structure and were uninhabited were demolished and removed from the area*

- *The Housing Minister spoke to the persons in South Success backlands and stated that efforts are ongoing for land acquisition through NICIL and further reminded persons of the Ministry's zero-tolerance approach towards squatting.*

- *The illegal occupants were encouraged by the Minister to form themselves into a team to engage the Ministry to find a way forward.*
- ***September 8 2020**, a group calling themselves representatives of the **South Success Backlands Squatters** engaged the Ministry at the Ministry's Office in Georgetown.*
- *The Ministry's team was led by Minister of Housing and Water, the Hon. Collin Croal, M.P., along with Chief Executive Officer of the Central Housing and Planning Authority, Sherwin Greaves, Chief Executive Officer of the National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL), Mr. [REDACTED] Sharma, Chairman, Mr. [REDACTED] of the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GUYSUCO) and Better Hope Neighbourhood Council Chairman [REDACTED].*
- *At the meeting, the Government's zero-tolerance position on squatting was further made clear, and residents were told to apply for land through the established process. They were also told that the Ministry would be willing to assist them in every possible respect for a legitimate house lot at an alternative location.*
- *On the same day, the Minister engaged group leader Ms. [REDACTED] who committed to assisting the process of data collection of the number of persons who were squatting, etc. The Ministry of Housing and Water committed to continue engaging group leaders of South Success, East Coast Demerara, on the issue of the informal settlement in that community. A meeting was scheduled to meet the squatters in the area on September 9, 2020.*
- *Several persons interviewed by the media who had recently moved into the area, claimed that they are feeling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic as they have lost their jobs.*
- *The Minister assured the families that the Ministry is working to fast track its housing drive which will ensure that every citizen is served.*
- *He informed the leaders that he had begun negotiations with NICIL and other state agencies for the proper acquisition of lands for distribution. He*

however urged the residents to be patient as he pointed out that while lands are being sought; it would take some amount of time for these lands to be developed with the necessary infrastructure.

- *“There is more than enough land across this country for housing purposes and for every citizen, and we are working to meet the demand, however, we have inherited over 68,000 applications in the system, and we are working to address that backlog,” the Minister assured.*

- *The Ministry through its Community Development Unit agreed to embark on a data collection exercise to assess the situation in South Success. This would entail reaching out to persons who were illegally occupying lands in the area with the aim of ascertaining if they have an active housing application in the system. For persons who have never applied, provision will be made to have their application processed.*

- *Notwithstanding this, the Ministry emphasized that squatting has an adverse effect on infrastructure, health, and safety of citizens as well as impedes significantly future development.*

- *Thursday **September 9, 2020** the scheduled meeting with the South Success squatters was held with Mr. Sherwyn Greaves, the Chief Executive Officer of the Central Housing and Planning Authority (the agency which is responsible for national housing programme and the squatter resettlement programme) and Deputy Manager of the Community Development Department, Ms. Donell Bess-Bascom. A group of persons identified themselves as community leaders. Group Leader Ms. [REDACTED] again committed to providing the Housing Ministry with a list of persons who have applications and those who were interested in applying. Regrettably no such information was provided by the Group Leader.*

- *As more squatters were arriving to settle on the land, they were asked to discontinue squatting in the South Success area as the conditions were unhealthy and unsuitable for habitation. NICIL agreed to provide trucks to assist families with the removal of structures. This offer at that time was refused.*

- **September 18th, 2020-** NICIL commissioned a drone report which revealed increased occupancy of squatters noting approximately fifteen (15) “wooden structures”. Many other incomplete shacks were also observed but it is believed that many squatters were not living on the site, but rather visiting from day-to-day to secure the location.
- **September 30, 2020-** NICIL, GUYSUCO and Law enforcement visited and engaged squatters asking them to remove. Persons who were willing to relocate were escorted out of the location with their belongings. Others opted to defy law enforcement which led to a confrontation. The Police were attacked with cutlasses and missiles etc., and policemen responded with tear smoke and rubber bullets to control the mob. (see Guyana Police Force press statement, September 30, 2020)
- **October 1, 2020,** The Guyana Sugar Corporation (GUYSUCO) announced it had lost approximately GY \$2 Billion in future cash flow due to the destruction of sugar canes by burning and clearing the lands for occupation by squatters.
- Chief Executive Officer (Ag), Mr. [REDACTED] said,
 

“GUYSUCO has seen a destruction of almost \$2 billion in future cash flows because of the destruction of those varieties. Plus, we have to re-establish the cultivation and these lands were all in cane cultivation before the decision was made to close the Enmore sugar mill.”
- Mr. [REDACTED] noted that over 600 people from the East Coast Demerara have already indicated their interest in working with GUYSUCO.
 

“Of course, we cannot employ them all at one time but it tells you the social need of this project. We have an agenda to create jobs, we have an agenda to reduce our cost of production, we have an agenda to increase our revenue and for us to do that successfully, to contribute to Guyana’s human and economic development, we need these areas to drive that agenda,”
- Head of GUYSUCO’s Agricultural Department, Mr. [REDACTED] said 17,000 varieties of sugar cane were destroyed when the squatters burnt the fields. He explained that the creation of a single variety is not a simple process as it takes 14 to 17 years to produce a single stalk of cane.

*“What we want to emphasise is that the loss here is not just a set of cane, it is so much hard work to select it that the staff have become very demoralised...Some of the clones are starting to grow back and we might be able to salvage some data from it. Another field had 16,500 varieties of cane...Data is worth gold. The data that we have lost here puts back our programme in some [varieties] 10 years”*

- *GUYSUCO reported that it expected to start grinding sugar at the sugar estates in 2022 as plans move apace to revitalize the industry. However, for that to happen, a 12-month cycle of cane is required to get the factory up and running.*
- ***October 1, 2020** - Three weeks after promising to provide the Ministry with information on the number of squatters, no information was forthcoming from the Group Leader Ms. [REDACTED]*
- *Following reports that group leaders were collecting money from persons under the pretext that it was payment for a house lot allocation, the Ministry made several attempts to contact the Group Leader but to no avail. Persons reported that they had made payments ranging between GY\$75,000 to GY\$300,000 on promises of land allocation in the South Success area.*
- *The Ministry of Housing and Water organized an outreach at a nearby school, the Chateau Margot Primary School on October 1st, 2020. A total of 703 members (including children) from several informal settlements, including South Success Backlands, attended that exercise. It was discovered that 350 of these already had standing applications for houselots in the system and as such they would be given priority.*
- *The exercise was geared at assisting these families in their quest for lawful homeownership. Persons were invited to visit the venue, from 8:00 hrs with a valid form of identification (passport or national identification card), proof or affidavit of income, TIN certificate, and marriage certificate if applicable. For persons with children below the age of 18, copies of their birth certificates were required. Applications forms for house lots were also available at the venue.*
- *The Ministry waived fees for the application form and its officers assisted with their completion.*

- *This is the first step to facilitating the process of acquiring government house lots, that is legal ownership of a plot of land from the agency.*
- *On the same day the Minister made a public statement that was carried in the all media,*

*“With specific reference to the residents currently embattled in a squatting dispute with the National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL), I will once again like to state for the record that I have personally visited the area twice to meet with the residents and engaged their leaders in discussions to bring this matter to an amicable conclusion. On Saturday, August 17, 2020, I and a team paid a visit to South Success, East Coast Demerara, in response to claims of illegal squatting. Following those discussions, on Tuesday, September 8, 2020, I again visited the area along with a team from the Ministry along with Mr. Shaw, and officials from NICIL to meet with residents. The team cautioned those persons who hailed from Greater Georgetown and the East Coast of Demerara that the lands on which they were erecting structures, including permanent ones, do not belong to the Ministry of Housing and Water or Central Housing & Planning Authority, and that their occupation of said lands remains illegal. This was widely covered in the media. The representatives engaged the Ministry the next day, Wednesday, September 9 2020, at the Ministry offices on Brickdam. They were also told that the Ministry would be willing to assist them in every possible respect for a legitimate house lot at an alternative location....The Ministry of Housing and Water will be hosting an exercise today, October 1, 2020, at the Chateau Margot Primary School geared at assisting these families in their quest for lawful homeownership.... Throughout the engagement process, my Ministry, along with NICIL representatives, have shown the utmost tolerance in engaging squatters/illegal occupants. The Ministry of Housing and Water remains committed to the Government’s Manifesto promise of the provision of ten thousand house lots annually and would like to assure persons who have applied for housing that the Ministry is doing everything in its power to satisfy the housing needs of all Guyanese.”*

- **October 5, 2020-** *Ministry of Housing and Water deployed a team for further data collection on the number of households dwelling in the area. This exercise was met with hostility from squatters. An assessment of the data so far revealed that several persons illegally occupying these lands are already property owners in other areas; some have rented their houses, and squatting to obtain more land, while others have been collecting money from persons to squat.*

- **October 9th, 2020**, the Minister made another public appeal in which he stated that “A citizen’s right to land must not be obscured by his or her obligation to follow the rule of law. It is simple, persons cannot occupy private lands without facing the consequences. The sensible thing to do is to discourage persons from squatting and to encourage them to acquire land using the legitimate process in place by the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA).”
- On the same day, October 9, 2020, a meeting was held with the Minister Home Affairs, the Hon. Robeson Benn, Senior Officers of the Guyana Police Force, Chief Executive Officer of NICIL, Chief Executive Officer and officials of GUYSUCO and a decision was taken for GUYSUCO to proceed with its land preparation activities in the area. GUYSUCO’s strategy to flood various areas was outlined. Flood fallowing is a common practice in the sugar industry, going back decades. The flooding of the backlands commenced on October 15, 2020. Persons who attempted to stop the excavators from passing through the area were arrested and released.
- **October 15, 2020**, GUYSUCO’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mr. ██████████ stated “GUYSUCO is not a housing agency. We are an agricultural agency and our exclusive business is in the cultivation and production of sugar and value-added sugar related products, and that is all we are trying to do in a legal and a legitimate way. We are basically trying to produce sugar from sugar lands, feed the sugar mills, and produce sugar for Enmore so that we can create over 2,000 jobs.”
- The CEO explained that to have successful outcomes from the sugar mills at Enmore, there must be a supply of one-year-old matured sugar canes and therefore, the lands have to be prepared now for cultivation in January 2021. As a result of the squatters remaining on the land, the original plans for re-cultivation and the creation of over 2,000 jobs were all being hindered.
- The CEO emphasized that the state-owned sugar company was not being unreasonable, since it had previously transferred high-value lands to the Housing Ministry’s Central Housing and Planning Authority to facilitate the creation of 28,000 house lots.



- **October 16, 2020** The Head of State during the launching of the “Dream Realised Housing Initiative” spoke directly to the South Success squatters:

*“It is not that we want you to be dislodged in the area. We want you to own your home too, that is why we sent the Housing teams so many times to see you, but there is a right way in doing things and the wrong way. In Guyana, we have to get accustomed to doing things the right way. We want to help you. We are going to move as fast as possible in this programme, but I am appealing to Guyanese, ‘let us do it the right way.’”*

- **October 17, 2020-** The Prime Minister Brigadier (ret’d) Hon. Mark Phillips met with the South Success squatters and offered to provide shelter to those who have been impacted. He offered shelter to families, especially those with children, with nowhere to go, but the offer was once again refused. Transportation was again offered to assist with removal of materials which were brought on the lands by the squatters.
- The Civil Defense Commission (CDC) deployed a team to determine the number of households and to conduct a needs assessment exercise with the view of setting up a shelter for those who had nowhere to go.
- All efforts to engage the squatters in a peaceful resolution of the situation and for them to peacefully vacate were met with hostility.
- **October 18, 2020** The Civil Defence Commission prepared the Graham’s Hall Primary School (closed due to Covid-19 pandemic) as a shelter for displaced squatters of South Success.
- Director General Lieutenant Colonel Kester Craig called on all those affected by the flooding at Success to immediately contact the National Emergency Management System (NEMS) on 226-1114, 623-1700 and 600-7500 and make their way to the Graham’s Hall Primary School, Cummings Lodge ECD, where housing, meals, sanitary facilities and water and electricity were available.
- **October 20, 2020,** The Civil Defence Commission (CDC) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health announced it would ensure squatters being sheltered at the Graham’s Hall Primary School were screened and tested for COVID-19.

- *Director General of CDC, Lieutenant Colonel Kester Craig stated that the shelter would accommodate 48 persons, but has the capacity to house more than 150 persons with the necessary spacing requirements in keeping with the COVID-19 guidelines. ( photographs provided in the Appendices)*
- *The CDC Director General stated that the shelter grants 24/7 access to accommodate persons who are working, with curfew protocols in place.*
- *Six classrooms were prepared with eight beds per room. Rooms were divided into male and female sections, with consideration for families. Two showers and one kitchen were readied.*
- *The CDC announced it would be providing meals and toiletries for the individuals while facilities for recreational activities were also available.*
- *Lt. Col. Craig explained that the shelter arrangements will remain in place until further guidance from Prime Minister, Brigadier (ret'd) Mark Phillips.*
- *In response, one person took up residence in the shelter.*
- **October 22**, *the Civil Defence Commission (CDC) noted that there was a total of five (5) shelterees being housed at the temporary emergency shelter established at the Graham's Hall Primary School, Cummings Lodge, East Coast Demerara (ECD). Three males and two females had taken up occupancy.*
- *On October 23, 2020, a tree fell on some of the squatters inhabiting the South Success Backlands and all eight persons were assisted by the police and others to transport them to the Georgetown Public Hospital and receive treatment. One person remains in ICU who was critically injured.*
- **October 29, 2020** *CDC reported that there are 12 occupants at the Graham Hall Primary School Shelter.*
- *The original or genuine squatters have now left South Success but there was a group of about 30 that do not live there but remain on the dam, drinking and hanging around every night.*

The above outline chronicles the efforts made by the Government and its highest officials being no less than the Prime Minister and the Minister of Housing and Water, as well as senior officials in state agencies -Chief Executive Officers of the Central Housing and Planning Authority, GUYSUACO and NICIL and the elected Local Government Authority over a two (2) month period. In fact, there were eight (8) interventions in this period involving these officials to work with the squatters and have them peacefully vacate the area. Every attempt has been made to remain humane and calm.

For a Government of less than one hundred days in the context of the Covid 19 pandemic which continues to spread and an economy that was in serious decline prior to the pandemic, the Government of Guyana remains committed to working with the squatters, wheresoever they are, in a peaceful and constructive manner to find housing solutions within the ambit of the law.

Respect for the rule of law and human rights of all Guyanese, the creation of jobs, the diversification of the economy and the reintroduction of poverty reduction programmes in which thousands will benefit, remains the larger picture and objective.

### **Appendices**

*Appendix 1- Aerial Drone photographs of the area*

*Appendix 11- the Prime Minister and Minister of Housing and Water with officials of CHPA, GUYSUACO, NICIL engaging with the squatters of South Success.*

*Appendix 111- September 30, 2020- standoff between the Police and the Squatters*

*Appendix 1V- September 30, 2020, Guyana Police Force Statement*

*Appendix V- Ad in all newspapers, October 18, 2020*

*Appendix VI- CDC Preparations of the shelter at Graham Hall Primary*

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