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PRESS RELEASE

PSA CONDEMNS MINISTER IMBERT

The Public Services Association (PSA) condemns in the strongest possible terms the recent action by Minister of Finance, Colm Imbert, whereby he issued letters to officers in the Board of Inland Revenue (BIR) and Customs and Excise Division (CED) to pressure them into joining the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority (TTRA) in the face of the Court of Appeal's clear direction that the status quo should be preserved to facilitate the PSA's appeal to the Privy Council. We see this as an attempt to intimidate workers and call upon them to ignore those letters and let the law take its course.

On 7th June, 2024, the Court of Appeal granted leave for the Constitutional claim filed by PSA member Terrisa Dhoray to be taken to the Privy Council. It also granted a stay to prevent the government from taking any steps to implement section 18 of the Act that would force workers to transfer to the TTRA. The stay was granted until 25th September, 2024, when the parties were due to report back to the Court of Appeal on the status of the Appeal to the Privy Council.

In reading the unanimous judgement of the Court of Appeal (comprising Justices of Appeal Mark Mohammed, Charmaine Pemberton and Mira Dean-Armorer), Justice Mohammed indicated that the Court was of the view that a stay was necessary because:

- i. for the ease of administration,
- ii. in the public interest, and
- iii. because the court had a duty to facilitate the administration of justice.

We are confident that the transcript of the hearing and the extempore judgment that was delivered in open court will vindicate our position in this matter and have hence applied for the official transcript of the court's judgment.

On 25th June, 2024, Mr. Imbert, without any forewarning, issued hundreds of letters to frustrated workers from the BIR and CED demanding that they make a decision on whether they would transfer to the TTRA or the Public Service or take early retirement by the end of July. This is a flagrant violation and gross disrespect to the struggle of the workers as well as the administration of justice. The stay granted by the Court was widely publicized in the media and Justice Mohammed read out the Court's judgement in open Court. This action by the government is totally inconsistent with the intention and purpose of the Court's Order and flies in the face of the rule of law.

The PSA has instructed its lawyers, led by Mr. Anand Ramlogan S.C., to file an urgent application for the Court to clarify and confirm the stay which was granted. The PSA has filed its appeal in the Privy Council and has sought an urgent hearing. We therefore call upon the government to respect the letter and spirit of the law and stop this vulgar and obscene attempt by Mr. Imbert to steal a march on the rights of these workers so that the highest Court in the land can adjudicate on this matter.

We are confident that the Court of Appeal will treat this matter with the seriousness that it deserves and reinforce the directive it gave on 7th June, 2024, that the status quo would be preserved in the first instance until 25th September, 2024, to allow the Privy Council to consider this important appeal.

The PSA stands in solidarity with the workers of the BIR and CED and warns the government that it will not stand idly by and allow it to trample on the rights of the aggrieved workers. We are committed to standing up and defending their rights against the onslaught of oppression and victimization to champion the cause of justice. We ask that the government respect the courts and let due process prevail.

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