



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

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MEDIA RELEASE

To those who do not want the Police to treat children like criminals, then give us the assurance that no child is a criminal

It is rather unfortunate, that despite all Commissioner of Police, Gary Griffith, has said over the past three weeks, certain persons continue to spread misinformation.

The CoP has consistently and repeatedly stated the role of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) during the COVID-19 Pandemic. However, a few continue to make comments to undermine and discredit the TTPS, based on their blatant lack of understanding of the role and function as well as operational procedure of the TTPS.

As recent as today's Trinidad Express, persons who should know better, persons with absolutely no training or experience in law enforcement, are telling the Police, yet again, how they should operate in matters of law enforcement.

An ex-Magistrate, who spent years on the Bench, including the Juvenile Court, decides to question the recent situation whereby 27 adults and children were assembled by a seafront in Sea Lots in breach of the Regulations of the Public Health Ordinance as the country fights the invisible COVID-19 virus.

The TTPS is not surprised by this article, as yet again it is written by a reporter who has published 32 consecutive negative and biased articles on the TTPS, so her pattern of hunting far and wide to find persons who would make negative and unsubstantiated comments against the Police Service, continues.

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The ex-Magistrate, whose comments are published in the article, spent many years dealing with young persons, many of whom she had to send to the Youth Training Centre (YTC) or St Michael's School for Boys, on remand for serious offences, or for reprehensible behaviour.

One wonders if she ordered the Police Officers to have the handcuffs removed from each one, when they entered her courtroom, and offered them cake and ice cream.

The comments in this article reek of a person with no knowledge in law enforcement and procedure for an arrest, whereby they voiced their concern that these individuals should not have been placed on the ground to lie down, because they were children. The CoP wishes to bring the following salient points to the attention of these attention seekers who obviously are not aware of the basic Standard Operations Procedure of law enforcement, hence verifying that what was done was the proper procedure:

1. There were over 25 persons all assembled in a confined area, breaking the law, and there were only six police officers involved. These persons, both adults and children, immediately starting running to escape in all directions. The only way that they all could have been held, was to have them remain in that position.

2. There were also several adults in the group. The CoP wonders if this ex-Magistrate was expecting that whilst the Police were involved in an operation, before they placed persons to lie down, that ID cards and dates of birth should have been demanded to verify who should "be placed to lie on the ground and who should not be".

3. The ill-advised comments by persons making such statements, is expected because they have never been in regular police operations whereby when police confront persons, suspects at times shoot at them to escape. The safest and best way to ensure

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that an officer is not killed, is to ensure that all persons, especially when they are in large numbers, are lined up on the wall or on the floor, to ensure that they have no firearms or weapons that can harm the officer.

4. This ex-Magistrate should do her research, because her comments give the impression that minors do not carry weapons or shoot at police officers. Within the last year alone, there were 41 minors held with firearms. The reporter and the ex-Magistrate, in their haste to undermine the correct actions of the Police Service, seem to be ignorant of this.

5. We know that everything in this country is tried to be boxed in and judged based on race, religion, or politics. The TTPS does not conduct actions based on any of those matters. The exact actions would have been taken anywhere, and anyplace, if 27 persons after caught breaking the law, were seen scampering and trying to escape, running on top of a cargo ship, jumping over fences, diving in the water, or hiding in the bush.

6. Even the Chairman of the Children's Authority decided to jump in and because he obviously did not read the laws or did any research but wanted to jump in to make a comment, he stated that "you cannot charge somebody for liming". The Chairman should be advised to read before he talks because every one of those 27 could have been charged as they breached the Public Health Ordinance Regulation 7 via assembling in a group of more than five, "being found at or in any beach, river, stream, or spring", hence facing a fine of \$50,000 and six months in jail, but it was the CoP who directed that they be released.

7. Every one of these individuals could have been charged for breaking the law. Instead, after having them searched and realizing that they had no illegal weapons and were brought to their feet, they were instead spoken to, and advised of what they were doing, and the CoP then showed compassion and released them without being arrested.

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At a time when the majority of people are in support of what the TTPS is doing, a certain reporter seemed desperate to have to hunt far and wide to find persons to criticize what is being done to save lives.

For those who may not have been aware, the police officers on the scene of that situation, which was a highly volatile area with gang activity and persons in possession of illegal weapons, what the Police did was the proper procedure, and the CoP reminds all officers to ensure that their lives remain preserved and not listen to this ex-Magistrate and others who are totally ignorant of the dangers that officers encounter out there on a daily basis.

There are those who can easily sit in their armchair and make irresponsible comments, but it is the police officers who are out in the front line taking in hostile fire on a daily basis, both by adults and criminals. It is advisable that such persons do research rather than making comment based on emotion or just to be relevant.

By the way, the CoP is more aware of the rights and safety of children than most, as it was he who established the Child Protection Unit in the TTPS in 2015, when he held a previous position, all aimed at the protection of children.

Look at the Table below. It shows the list of crimes where juveniles have been charged including being in possession of firearms and ammunition, and shooting at the Police. To the ex-Magistrate and the reporter, if they had their way, had the Police confronted these juveniles with firearms, they should have been given “milk and cookies”.

**Data on Juvenile Offenders of Firearm Related Offences 2017
– 2020(27.04.20)**

Offences	2017	2018	2019	2020	Grand Total
Murders	4	14	2	0	20
Armed With Weapon	2	0	0	0	2
Breaking Offences	0	1	0	0	1
Kidnapping	0	0	3	1	4
Other Minor Crimes	4	1	0	0	5
Other Serious Crimes	8	4	5	2	19
Poss Of F/Arm & Ammo	48	62	41	9	160
Robbery	21	23	16	11	71
Sexual Offence	0	0	1	0	1
Wounding/Shooting	0	1	2	0	3
Grand Total	87	106	70	23	286

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END

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