



MEDIA RELEASE

THREE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FISHERMEN RELEASED BY VENEZUELAN AUTHORITIES

The Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs wishes to provide an update on the three (3) Trinidad and Tobago nationals who had been detained in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The Ministry, through the Embassy of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in Caracas, was informed of the detention of three Trinidad and Tobago nationals on the night of Thursday, April 5th, 2018. Consular officials at the Embassy spoke with one of the detainees Mr. Nicholas Nanlal Hanjarie, who informed that he, his father Mr. Awardhath Hajarie, and Mr. Shami Seepersad were held by the Venezuelan *Guardia Nacional Bolivariana* under suspicion of illegally entering Venezuelan waters.

The Embassy, through its contact in Tucupita, Delta Amacuro State, provided information related to the general procedure of detention matters and assisted with translations on that night. Mr. Mykell Sankar, a Trinidad and Tobago national resident in Venezuela and brother of Mr. Hanjarie was contacted on the morning of Friday, April 6th, 2018, informed of the incident, of which he had been aware, and asked to provide documents that would verify the nationality of the detained fishermen. Mr. Sankar sent photographs of the Trinidad and Tobago Identification Cards of the two Hanjaries but none for Mr. Seepersad. The photographs were transmitted to the Embassy's contact in Tucupita and their identities were verified as nationals of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Awardhath Hanjarie was taken to a clinic on Saturday, April 8th, 2018 with complications arising from diabetes and hypertension but was discharged in good health after being examined and treated by a medical professional. Relatives in Venezuela have informed that he remains in good health.

On April 11th, 2018, the Embassy was informed by Venezuelan immigration authorities that the three fishermen appeared in court and were subsequently permitted to leave Venezuela upon receipt of a **Certificate of Voluntary Abandonment of Venezuela** which would allow them safe legal passage out of the jurisdiction. The Venezuelan immigration authorities further agreed to release the fishing boat upon receipt of ownership documents (provided by the boat's owner) through Mr. Sankar.

To that end, the Ministry made the necessary arrangements with the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard for the fishermen to be received in Trinidad and Tobago waters on Sunday, April 15th, 2018. Mr. Sankar confirmed the rendezvous arrangements. On Sunday morning, while the Coast Guard vessel was en route to the meeting point, the Embassy was informed of the cancellation of the rendezvous arrangements.



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS

The Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs wishes to emphasize that that the three fishermen are free to leave Venezuela on their own volition. Consular officials at the Trinidad and Tobago Embassy have informed that the fishermen are currently housed with relatives in Tucupita.

The Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs further wishes to emphasize that while all diplomatic avenues were pursued to secure the timely release of the detained fishermen, it was also necessary to ensure that the laws and procedures of Venezuela were fully respected and that due process was allowed to take place in accordance with these laws.

April 16th, 2018

Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs