



Address to the Nation

by Prime Minister Dr. the RT Hon. Keith Mitchell
Thursday, March 6, 2008

Law and Order in Grenada



My fellow Grenadians at home and abroad: I welcome this opportunity to address you tonight on the state of law and order in our beautiful and promising society.

In doing so, I invite you my brothers, sisters and fellow citizens to journey with me as we reconcile the idea that there is a close relationship between leadership, economic prosperity and law and order.

My brothers and sisters of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, only the naïve among us would deny that law and order seems to be under threat in our developing society.

As a nation struggling with the promise to being a “super power” in decency and civilized social living, it would appear that we are being burdened with escalating incidences of serious crime, including murder. Evil, it would appear, is threatening to hug our shores.

Our very survival as a nation, however, depends on this not happening and will involve every one of us as law abiding citizens signing- up in defence of law, order and progress.

But to give of your best in this struggle against lawlessness and disorder, especially those born over the past two decades, we must first appreciate the historical context of the evolution of this problem from the perspective of the threat posed to our sovereignty in CARICOM.

LESSONS OF THE PAST

The threat to law and order in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique emerged, and was consolidated, in the 1970s. Our tri-island states' constitutional democracy then, faced the influx of instability and destabilization from forces opposed to the government of our first national hero, Sir Eric Mathew Gairy, who had to endure the consequences of radical populism.

Violent and criminal acts were perpetrated throughout the country for which Sir Eric Gairy was blamed, and designed solely to undermine democratic governance throughout Grenada.

The murder and disappearance of innocent Grenadians, the torching of schools and other such atrocities, were attributed to acts of desperation by Sir Eric Gary only to be acknowledged after the facts, by the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) of 1979, as part-and- parcel of their own pre-revolutionary strategy.

The phantom plots and the strategy to undermine democracy, was carried over into the revolution of March 13, 1979.

In true Nichodemus-style, the PRG hijacked the country's democratic ideals at gun point falsely promising to liberate the people on the basis of an imported foreign ideology unsuited to the African ancestral heritage of the people of the Caribbean.

But as day broke on the revolution, its true meaning and purpose came to light.

Hundreds of Grenadian Rastafarian brethrens were subjected to the most brutal suppression under the PRG, while other prominent sons and daughters of the soil were singled out for special humiliation.

Brother Strachan Phillips' body was riddled with nineteen (19) bullets on the orders of the People's Revolutionary Army (PRA) without any tangible proof of guilt.

The media landscape was corrupted and became the source of Marxist and Soviet-style indoctrination. Hundreds more Grenadians, during the revolution, were routinely picked-up by revolutionary forces and jailed, while countless others were labeled "counters" for not toeing the ideological line of the revolution.

Even our present leader of Her Majesty's loyal Opposition, Mr. Tillman Thomas, was himself subjected to imprisonment during the revolution, under conditions best described as filthy and inhumane.

Suppression, anti-Christian sentiments, tyranny and repressive laws, signaled the death of the "revo".

The revolution of 1979 ended in 1983 the way it started - violently and shrouded in deception.

As a Christian society, we have endured the anguish to our psyche since 1983, willing as a nation to come together and forgive the transgressions of our past history though not necessarily forgetting the lessons learnt, lest we make the same mistakes twice.

Brothers and sister, I am certain that you will agree that great strides have been made since the traumatic events of 1979 to 1983, to restore Grenada's capacity for industriousness, productivity, economic growth and stability, social peace, prosperity, progress and fulsome support for democratic governance and law and order.

RAINBOW COALITION

It is my conviction and that of my team, that as national leaders, we all have an abiding responsibility to lead by example in virtually all that we do. For as the Grenadian proverb goes: "If the cow is a kicker, the calf will be a kicker".

As a society, we cannot hope to prosper if resolution of the slightest disagreement or domestic conflict brings into play the use of knives and guns or weapons in general.

I am the first to admit, brothers and sisters, that we will have to place greater emphasis on strengthening the role of the family as a major socialization agency and bring our young people closer to Christian values.

More and more, community and group conflicts among young people in Grenada are identified as the source of violent outbursts.

A lot of what our young men face today is about choice, choice about bad company, to fight or not to fight, drugs and sex which literally impacts on the quality of discipline in our schools, homes and communities.

Our young men therefore, have challenges and one way to achieve sustainable improvement in discipline is to give them a source of power that allows them to maintain good moral standards to stay on the correct path.

This is where it helps tremendously when we as leaders and adult citizens resolve to take a firm stand against all forms of violence and disorder in our society.

As a Christian nation it is imperative that we form a *rainbow coalition* of shared interest involving the church, politicians, village groups, groups on the blocks, professional organizations, the schools, and other elements of civil society in defence of law, order and decency.

Brothers and sisters, we have nowhere else to call *home* but this promising society of ours, and we see what horrors have befallen some societies that failed to lock the gate in time against violence, acts of criminality, disorder, uncivil behaviour and threats to national security.

In this context, I wish to thank those Grenadians and institutions including the churches, for their positive response to my call recently for a National Day of Prayer for all victims of violence since the start of the year.

It is my hope that church organizations will continue to facilitate deeper involvement in the national effort in support of law and order.

NO ONE IS ABOVE THE LAW

Given our past history and the strength of our current achievements, every living Grenadian must come to accept and be proud of the fact that no one, not even I as Prime Minister, is above the law.

This is a principle that needs to be drilled into the consciousness of every one of us. Criminality and alleged criminal acts should be followed to their conclusion no matter what the wider consequences

may be. This, my dear brothers and sisters, is the pinnacle on which our success as a civilized nation depends.

Most of you are reasonably aware that the son of the Minister for Social Development, the Hon. Yolande Bain-Hosford, was charged late last year for a crime allegedly committed two years ago. The law took its course in the matter and the young man was acquitted of the charge laid against him.

Around the same time one of my former security officers was arrested and charged for an alleged shooting offence. He too was brought before the court which made its decision in the case independent of any political or other interference. In simple terms, the law took its course.

These two brief, but relevant examples, of the supreme respect for law and order in Grenada, cut to the heart of the emerging problem in our country today in respect of the infringement upon the rule of law by some aspiring leaders whose only strategy to seeking power is tapping into the frustrations of democratic reforms to deliver goods and services to our people with the speed and quantity they expect.

The exploitation of the “politics of expectation” today, similar to the 1970s, is leading some among us to attempt to push the country dangerously close to the brink of anarchy.

To our collective mind, in circumstances where any citizen of our country is alleged to have broken the law or have serious allegations leveled against them where there is evidence to substantiate wrong-doing, then the laws of the land must be obeyed without fair or favour.

In this context, sisters and brothers, fellow citizens, if reports of the recent kidnapping, robbery and torture of a member of the Royal Grenada Police Force (RGPF) by some members of the executive of the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) are substantiated to be evidence-based and true, then the rule of law must prevail in the same manner in which it did for the son of a Member of our Parliament and Government and a former Protective Services officer.

This must be the way forward if Grenada in the eyes of the international community is not to be relegated to the status of a “jungle paradise” overrun by evil and hate and men prepared to suppress and brutalise our people.

This reality put us in the mood to ask the hard question: can you imagine a police officer in the United States, Canada or Britain performing their duties, correctly or incorrectly, and someone or a group of persons decides to detain torture and beat them without holy hell breaking loose in civil society?

Is it conceivable that such a thing can happen in Grenada without swift condemnation from members of civil society and demand for the rule of law and order to be upheld?

The police in every democracy have a legitimate role to play in securing peace and safety. In today's geo-political world, their law enforcement functions are heightened by diverse and powerful local and international influences impacting domestic politics.

There are anti-democratic funds readily available to support subversive activities in the geo-political world in which we exist. There are also forces wedded to terrorist agendas and drug money has been used to subvert legitimate governments.

The Grenadian public needs to know that in the present period of preparations for general elections, all these issues are given added significance and the police as an arm of the state are obliged to act in the best interest of peace, security and stability.

The police, my dear brothers and sisters of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, represent the last line of defence for peace and stability in our country.

If they are subject to physical attack, detention against their will and abuse by anyone, for any reason, ***when there is recourse in law for their indulgence of any alleged transgression***, then we would have no society left.

Didn't we once before turn a blind eye to such acts of lawlessness only to later regret it?

Sisters and brothers, if incidents like these are allowed to take root in our developing society that we have worked so hard to re-build after the traumas of the 1970s, 1980s and two very dangerous hurricanes, then all our efforts will have been in vain. We will have nothing respectable, decent, fair and just to bequeath to the next generation.

If and when this happens, we can turn the lights off on Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

PRESENT CHALLENGES

This reality, sisters and brothers, is the context in which we have to situate present day challenges in our society with respect to law and order.

Some of our citizens aspiring for leadership are not being responsible enough in their behaviour one to another, and the landscape of indiscipline on which they operate becomes more porous everyday.

Their irresponsible actions of provocation, disrespect for the laws and statutes of the land, allusions to phantom plots to justify their uncivil acts and outright threat to the peace and stability in the country, is threatening to weaken the solid and fertile soil of progress on which we as a people have planted so much faith in our ability to craft a society defined by the values of honesty, trust, hard work, discipline, commitment to country and love for one another.

What every law abiding Grenadian want more than anything today is a life of contentment where we all have more time to spend with our families, on recreational pursuits and individual ambitions.

As I have said to you many times before my brothers and sisters, the greatest gift you can give to yourselves and the generations to come, is to love your country.

The progress being experienced in Grenada today supersedes our individual egos. That progress is all about building a nation and shaping a society.

We have laid the solid foundation for the growth and prosperity of that society.

Thousands of new jobs have been created in the economy within the last three years and the agricultural, tourism and manufacturing sectors have all experienced positive growth within the same period. There are billions of dollars of private direct investments in Grenada today and the economy is growing at 4% per annum.

Thousands of our young people are being trained and certified to take up the real well paying jobs to come on stream shortly from the new investment projects.

We cannot stop this Progress now, my brothers and sisters.

Any threat to law and order, however minimal, will hinder economic development in our country. This could have disastrous consequences for us going forward in the globalize world of the twenty-first century.

This is why we say that in sustaining this progress, the society must be rooted in the rule of law, reinforced by the extension of the rights and liberties of our citizens irrespective of who they are.

But in recent times we have had the emergence of some rather disturbing acts of lawlessness and disorder that ought to cause serious concern for all of us. The problems that have arisen from this state of affairs are not hypothetical; they are not insignificant.

The Grenada Boy's Secondary School (GBSS) was burnt a second time in the recent past similar to the Anglican High school and other buildings, by unknown persons.

We have seen members and supporters of the NDC most recently dig up some of our roads, erect street signs, and construct bus shelters and other buildings without the permission of the Government.

We have witnessed the defiance of the NDC Member of Parliament for the Town of St. George vowing to continue this lawless practice.

Only recently, members of the NDC at the level of its leadership invaded my own constituency and interfered with a property of the government, namely a pre-school building, by proceeding to paint it without the consent, knowledge or permission of the Ministry of Education.

But the episode did not end there.

For following this act of lawlessness, the invading NDC forces then proceeded to curse and verbally abuse me threatening to hang me in the market-square after the next general election.

If this is not provocation of the highest order my brothers and sisters, then what is?

There are Grenadians who have spoken openly about persons in our society purporting to be offering representation at the highest level but who are known to be openly associated with suspected drug dealers and criminals and who, in pursuit of their own selfish ends, go on the block and promise to legalise marijuana and other drugs, if and when their party should come to power.

If this is not tantamount to the encouragement of illegality and lawlessness, then what is?

And what about the tendency to constantly disrespect the lawful institutions of the country, which is manifested in terms of attacks on:

- The Office of the Prime Minister
- The Office of the Governor General
- The Parliament
- The Speaker of the House of Representatives
- And the Office of the Commissioner of Police?

And to make matters worst, we recently had an NDC member of Parliament and Opposition spokesperson appearing on national television insinuating violence, or at the very least, uncivil behaviour, against anyone unfortunate enough to be caught by him monitoring his activities in the confines of his own bedroom - **a case of violence first and ask questions after !**

Sisters and brothers, these are frightening developments signaling milestones of danger and threat to law and order in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

In face of this, I am appealing for greater attention to how we resolve conflicts as a small developing human society.

For we know from bitter experience that threats to constitutional democracy, crime, violence, organized criminal gangs, radical populism, and disrespect for law and order, cause capital flight from within countries and stifle investment from outside.

CALL FOR UNITY

I am proud that the political movement that I lead has no history of ever interfering in the work of our police force as is evident by our complete support for the on-going independent investigation of allegations of kidnapping, detention and assault of a member of the

Royal Grenada Police Force (RGPF) by members of the executive of the NDC.

My brothers and sisters, now is the time for us all to come together as one family, one nation, indivisible under God, determined to continue transforming our liabilities into assets, so that generations to come can be justly proud.

If we are to prosper in the new technologically-driven global dispensation, peace must be maintained, social stability must become a priority of policy objectives and everyone must stand equal before the law.

Crime, violence and disrespect for the rule of law, from whatever quarter, if left unchecked, will undermine our society by establishing a state of instability which can lead to the destabilization of our democratic government (of whichever political stripe) and institutions.

Let us continue therefore, to pray for the peace and security of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Let us continue the process of confidence -building through concerted action and the fullest commitment to standing against lawlessness and disorder.

As I have said before, to ensure this, we must, as a nation, strengthen those institutions like the church, the family, voluntary organizations and civic groups that can deal effectively with this reality.

Brothers and sister, fellow citizens, I have no doubt that we can accomplish this.

Good night and God bless Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

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