



Justice Institute Guyana Inc.

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Tel: +592 653 6905

info@justiceinstitute.org

“The rule of law is the first casualty of the ‘oil curse’.”

Melinda Janki, Attorney-at-Law and Executive Director of the Justice Institute Guyana today warned that, **“The rule of law is the first casualty of the ‘oil curse’. Today disrespect for the rule of law is the lived reality in Guyana as GECOM fails to carry out its legal duties.”**

Attempts by the GECOM on 5th March 2020 to declare an election winner before tabulating all of the results from the Statements of Poll is an embarrassing, unintelligent and totally unacceptable attempt to rig a peaceful election. The Justice Institute Guyana deplores and regrets the discourteous behaviour of Karen Cummings towards international observers.

Guyana’s fragile democracy has been battered and undermined by irresponsible claims of vast oil wealth - from the totally unrealistic US\$168billion put forward by Global Witness to the more modest tens of billions from energy commentators and foreign press. These claims ignore the reality of Guyana’s unconscionable petroleum deal with Esso Exploration and Production Guyana Ltd., CNOOC Nexen Petroleum Guyana Ltd., and Hess Guyana Exploration Ltd. There has also been a total failure to tell the Guyanese people the truth about the climate emergency, the rapid movement away from fossil fuels in the global financial and energy markets, and the near certainty of Guyana’s petroleum becoming a stranded fossil fuel asset. Across the globe big oil has made trillions of US dollars, while damaging and destroying societies, lives, economies, and even the very air, water and land that sustain life.

Ms Janki also said that, **“Guyana must not base its future on an unstable and unsustainable petroleum foundation. Guyana must follow the constitutionally mandated path of sustainable development and preservation of natural capital for present and future generations.”**

In defence of the Constitution and democracy the Justice Institute Guyana

- (i) Demands that GECOM obeys national law and completes tabulation of the Statements of Poll;
- (ii) Calls on the World Bank to immediately suspend all oil related projects and activities in Guyana until democracy is restored;
- (iii) Demands that all oil production and exploration activities are suspended safely and without risk to Guyana’s fragile marine environment until democracy is restored;

- (iv) Insists that the next government obeys the Constitution and puts Guyana firmly on a sustainable development path.

Irrespective of party loyalties the vast majority of Guyana's people do not want a government that clings to office on the basis of illegal declarations or an incomplete tabulation. The Guyanese people are entitled to a functioning and peaceful democracy that allows everyone to live in freedom.

The Justice Institute Guyana acknowledges with deep gratitude the work of the international observers and the statements from Caricom, the Commonwealth, Canada-EU-UK-USA, OAS. We are also grateful to the Washington based Centre for International Environmental Law for their swift support for the rule of law in Guyana and to the many other individuals and internationally recognised bodies including the Carter Centre for their continued commitment to free and fair elections.

For further information:

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