

**Ms. Anna Correia**  
**President**  
**Guyana Empowered Peoples' Action Network (GEPAN)**  
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**January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Hon. Minister Carl Greenidge**  
**Ministry of Foreign Affairs**  
**254 South Road & Shiv Chanderpaul Drive**  
**Georgetown**

Dear Minister Greenidge,

**Amerindians Arrested by Surinamese Maritime Patrol**

The Guyana Empowered Peoples' Action Network (GEPAN) on behalf of the Village Council and people of Orealla - Siparuta, located in Region 6, would like to bring to your attention the following matter requiring your urgent intervention:

GEPAN was informed today, January 26, that the people of Orealla - Siparuta are of recently being harassed by the Surinamese Coast Guards patrolling on the Corentyne River.

According to information from the Village Council and Former Toshao Floyd Edwards, a group of villagers were fishing during the course of last week on the Corentyne River when they were stopped by the Surinamese Patrol and taken to Suriname where they were detained for several hours. Their families were not informed of the arrest and they were only able to return after having overnighted in Suriname. Attempts from the fishermen to explain to the patrol that they are Amerindians from Orealla who have strong ties with their Surinamese Arawak cousins of Apura, proved futile.

The people of Orealla - Siparuta have depended on the Corentyne River since they initially settled in the area decades before the establishment of the Guyana and Suriname national territorial and maritime boundaries. They depend on the Corentyne River for fishing which is done mainly through "cadel" (line and hook (s)), and to travel to other parts of Guyana. The Corentyne River represents the main source of daily subsistence for the Amerindians of Orealla - Siparuta.

The people of Orealla Siparuta are aware of Suriname being granted national sovereignty over the width of the Corentyne River via the decision rendered by international arbitration in 2007. However, they now fear that centuries of ancestral and traditional indigenous customs, way of life and rights will now be violated. They also fear that the ancient ties which they maintain with their cousins in Suriname, the Arawak people of Apura, will now be severed.

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GEPAN on behalf of the people of Orealla Siparuta, invokes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), in particular:

1. The Preamble which recognises that “the situation of indigenous peoples varies from region to region and from country to country and that the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical and cultural backgrounds should be taken into consideration”
2. Article 8 which states: “States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of and redress for:
  - (a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities; (...)”
3. Article 11 which states: “Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. (...)”
4. Article 20 which states: “Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities”.

GEPAN calls on the Government of Guyana through the Foreign Affairs Ministry, to act immediately in favour of the internationally recognised rights of the Amerindians of Orealla – Siparuta and all other Amerindians who live along the Corentyne River.

We also urge them to engage the Government of Suriname, the United Nations and other civil society actors to work towards ensuring that the indigenous rights of Amerindians, who depend on the Corentyne River for their livelihood, are preserved.

We look forward to your swift intervention.

Regards,



**Anna Correia**  
**President**  
**GEPAN**

**Cc: Hon. Minister of State, Joseph Harmon**  
**Cc: Hon. Minister of Indigenous Affairs, Sydney Allicock**  
**Cc: UN Resident Representative to Guyana, Ms. Khadija Musa**

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**Cc: Delegation of the EU to Guyana**  
**Cc: ABC Countries**  
**Cc: ACTO Representative to Guyana**