

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 73/2007

17 July 2007

The Opposition understands that there was an incident involving a Mercedes Benz that collided with a small masonry wall outside the Victoria Stadium by the CEPESA petrol station and that a person who was in the vicinity was taken for questioning by the Police. The following are the facts as they have been presented to the Opposition.

This person was on his way to work walking across the airport runway when two police officers in a patrol car asked him if he had been involved in the car accident. The person replied that it had nothing to do with him.

He continued to his place of work on the other side of the runway and was again approached by two more armed police officers who asked him the same question. The person continued to his place of work where the original policemen who were in the patrol car arrived and took him away for questioning.

The person was detained for almost three hours, and he was not allowed to telephone either his father or any member of the family. He was made to go with the officers in search for the driver of the Mercedes, then put in a room at the police station where he was interrogated. On being released, almost three hours later, he was told that the police might need to come back to him if there was a need for any further interrogation.

The Opposition understands that the person in question always walks to work across the runway at that time from his home in Laguna Estate, he does not have a driving license and had no injuries which would have resulted from being involved in such a car crash.

The person's father went to make a complaint at the Police complaints authority. He was told that the civil servant who handles such complaints was on leave and that therefore no complaint could be made until that person came back from holiday.

It is, of course, obvious that employees are fully entitled to take their annual leave as and when it suits them. However, it is the duty of the Government to ensure that there is continuity of service to the public. The Government must provide adequate cover.

Indeed, in this particular case, the police complaints function is only a small part of the overall duties of the post and presumably these other areas are also being affected. It is totally unacceptable that adequate cover should not be provided by the Government.

The Opposition is making this issue public in the expectation that it will be looked into and corrected and that the resources to maintain the availability of

public services, in this and other areas, will be guaranteed by the Government to ensure that there are no gaps when staff make use of their annual leave to which they are entitled.

ENDS