

1 December 2014

Hon. Freundel Stuart QC, MP
Prime Minister of Barbados
Prime Minister's Office
Government Headquarters
Bay Street, St. Michael

Dear Prime Minister Stuart:

**Clarifying Barbados and its Government's position
on equal protection, gender and sexual orientation**

A year ago you set a fine example of senior Caribbean statesmanship when a young Barbadian human rights defender wrote to you asking for your support in recognising the rights and protecting the dignity and security of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender persons (LGBT) who do not have the privilege of occupying positions of power.

CariFLAGS is a 17-year-old organisation whose directors and stakeholders are domestic LGBT NGOs across the Caribbean. Our shared goal is to build Caribbean nations where LGBT people enjoy the full fruits of citizenship. One of the ways we do this is by leveraging resources for and supporting the development of leadership and strategy by groups like Barbados–Gays, Lesbians & All-Sexuals against Discrimination (B-GLAD).

To our admiration, you responded to B-GLAD founder Donnya Piggott's November 2013 appeal by committing yourself and your government to "elimination of all forms of discrimination including discrimination against persons of differing sexual orientation".

We were therefore deeply saddened by your silence last week when, in response to her exercise of her duty as a human rights defender to speak out against discriminatory practices and legislation, the same young woman and the organisation she leads were publicly castigated as "mad" by your Minister of the Environment & Drainage, who asserted to a news organisation with a sneer that he had the "freedom" to advocate gender-based discrimination in law and to speak out against the freedom of any group of Barbadians.

Dr. Denis Lowe continues to serve in your Cabinet after declaring his intention to campaign against precisely the kind of gender-neutral legislation your Cabinet member Senator Esther Byer Suckoo has proposed to close gender gaps in social protection against violence and harassment—both in November 2009 as Minister of Family, Youth & Sports, and again in February 2011 as Minister of Labour & Social Security, after you assumed office as Prime Minister. Minister Lowe has threatened to resign unless certain Barbadians are excluded from the protection of the state in such legislation.

While sexual orientation, sadly, remains an area of opportunism within political parties in 21st-century Barbados, Min. Lowe's actions have now made this a matter of Government policy on equal protection regardless to gender and sexual orientation.

Your silence on the matter is quite troubling. We hope that you will act swiftly to reassure the regional and your national community where Barbados stands on this critical question of human rights—a response we hope will reflect the level-headed policymaking approach your Government had taken in the past and not stoop to cheap appeals to polarisation and exclusion.

Your peer, Prime Minister Dean Barrow of Belize, made clear in his Independence address to the nation last year that a “Constitution that affirms the supremacy of God also affirms fundamental rights and the dignity of the individual human being...That same Constitution further declares that all persons are equal before the law and entitled to non-discrimination; to freedom from interference with their privacy; and to freedom from unlawful attacks on their honour and reputation.” His government, he said, “will therefore fully respect the right of the churches to propagate their understanding of the morality, or immorality, of homosexuality. But what Government cannot do is to shirk its duty to ensure that all citizens, without exception, enjoy the full protection of the law.”

We hope you will make it clear that the Barbadian Constitution and Government will do likewise.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Robinson', with a large, stylized initial 'C' on the left and a large 'R' on the right.

Colin Robinson
Manager

cc B-GLAD

InterAmerican Commission on Human Rights Rapporteurship on the Rights of LGBTI Persons
Parliamentarians for Global Action