PRESS STATEMENT

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana has confirmed reports that two Guyanese registered fishing vessels – the Lady Nayera and the Sea Wolf – operating off the coast of Waini Point within Guyana’s Exclusive Economic Zone, were intercepted by Venezuelan naval vessel Commandante Hugo Chavez GC 24 on Thursday January 21, 2021. The Captains were instructed to chart a course to Port Guiria where the boats and crew have been detained. To date, the Government of Guyana has not been informed by the Government of Venezuela of the detention of its nationals. The Venezuelan vessel was illegally manouevring within Guyana’s EEZ and Contiguous Zone when it intercepted, boarded and commandeered the Guyanese fishing vessels. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is currently seeking to ascertain the status and welfare of the crew members.

Guyana condemns in the strongest possible terms this wanton act of aggression by the Venezuelan armed forces against Guyana and Guyanese citizens. This Venezuelan action amounts to an interference with the sovereign rights of Guyana in its EEZ, contrary to international law. It is noted that this latest hostility follows closely on the heels of a Decree recently issued by President Nicolas Maduro which purports to establish “a new maritime territory of Venezuela called ‘Territory for the development of the Atlantic Façade’”, encompassing Guyana’s territorial waters, EEZ and continental shelf, as well as its land territory west of the Essequibo River. Guyana has emphatically condemned this Venezuelan Decree as a flagrant violation of its sovereignty and sovereign rights, and of fundamental rules of international law.

The Government of Guyana insists on the immediate release of the crew and vessels. It further exhorts the Government of Venezuela, and its agents, to behave in a manner consistent with international law and good neighbourly relations.

The international community will be kept informed of all actions undertaken by Venezuela to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Guyana.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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