PR / PEARCE ROBINSON

THE MAGAZINE

ISSUE 01
NOV 2026

POLITICS
DIPLOMACY
INVESTIGATION
THE CARIBBEAN
THE WORLD
CULTURE

A Free Press Matters

Why Independent Journalism Strengthens Caribbean Democracy

PEARCE ROBINSON
ON POWER, ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE PUBLIC ENTEREST

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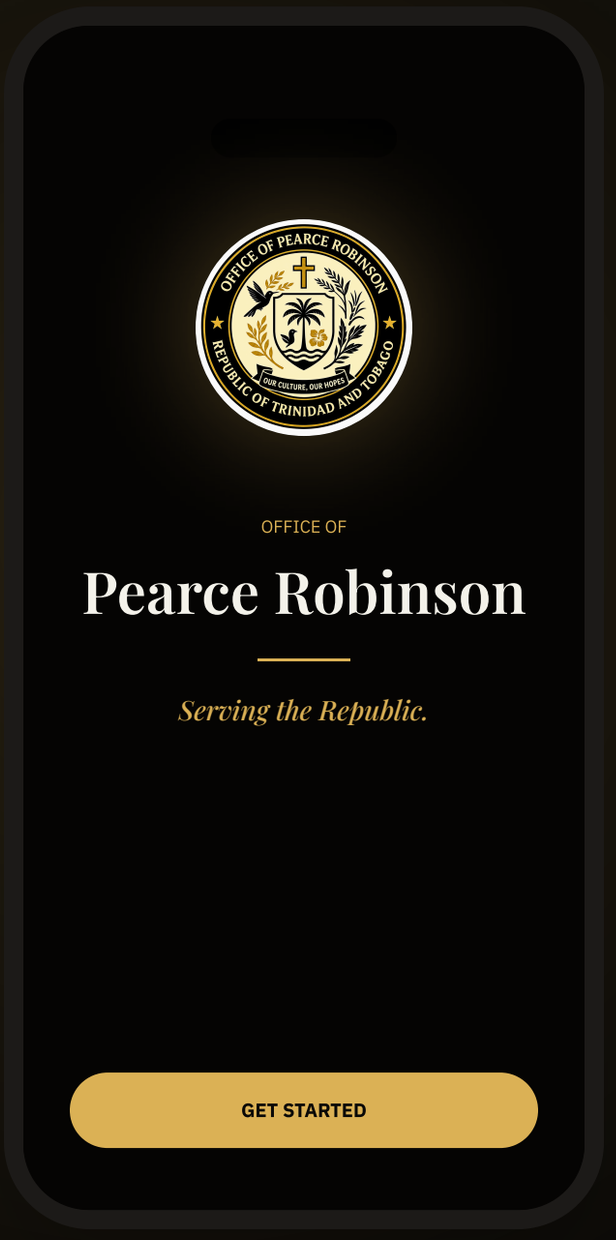
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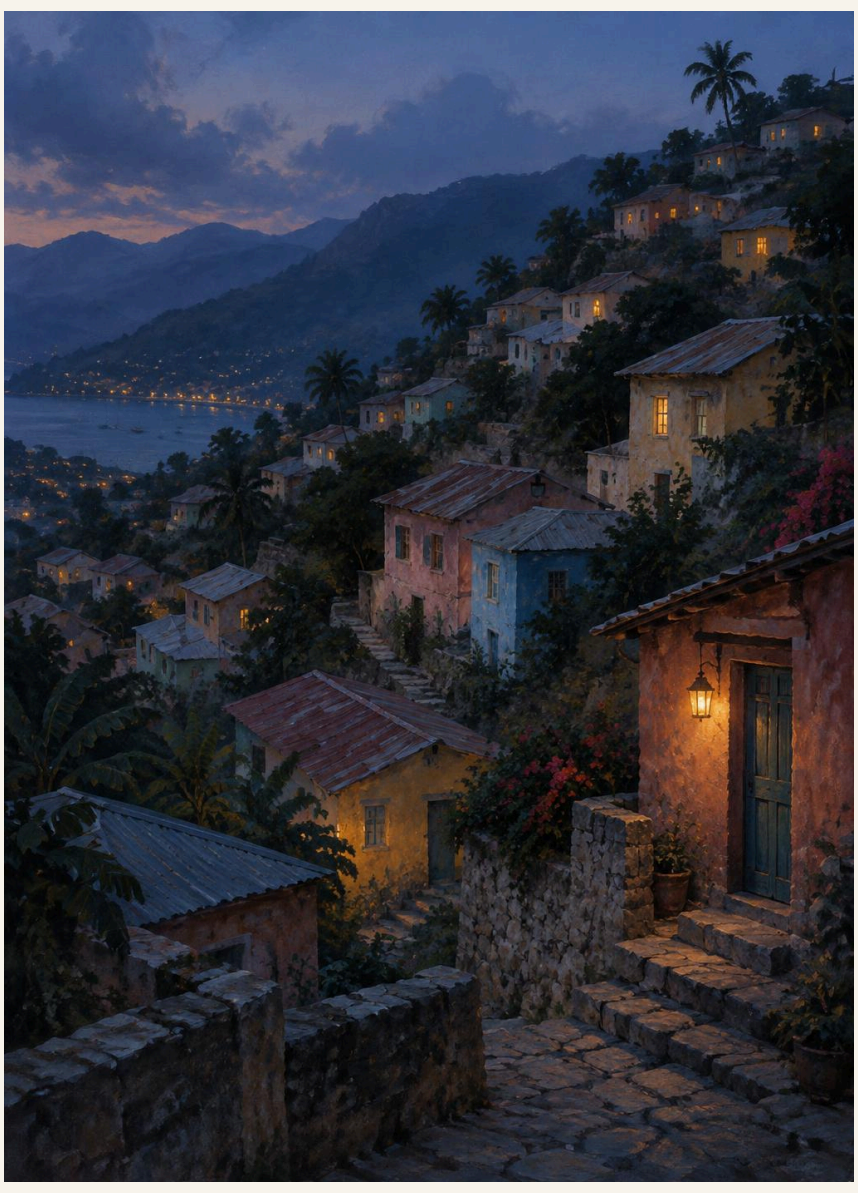
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THIS ISSUE

Issue 01 brings international affairs into conversation with the lives and institutions of the CARIBBEAN. *Its cover feature follows* MIA MOTTLEY'S *diplomacy into the financing arrangements and public services those negotiations are intended to support.* AROUND *it, new essays follow the region's pressing international questions:* AMERICAN *power at sea,* HAITI, *the great powers,* WASHINGTON *after the midterms,* GUYANA'S *oil, climate finance, citizenship by investment, migration and reparations, followed by a profile of the* REVEREND DR TESSA HENRY-ROBINSON *and The* BUSINESS *of* GENERATIONS, *with* ANSA MCAL'S *historical photographs.*

PEARCE ROBINSON

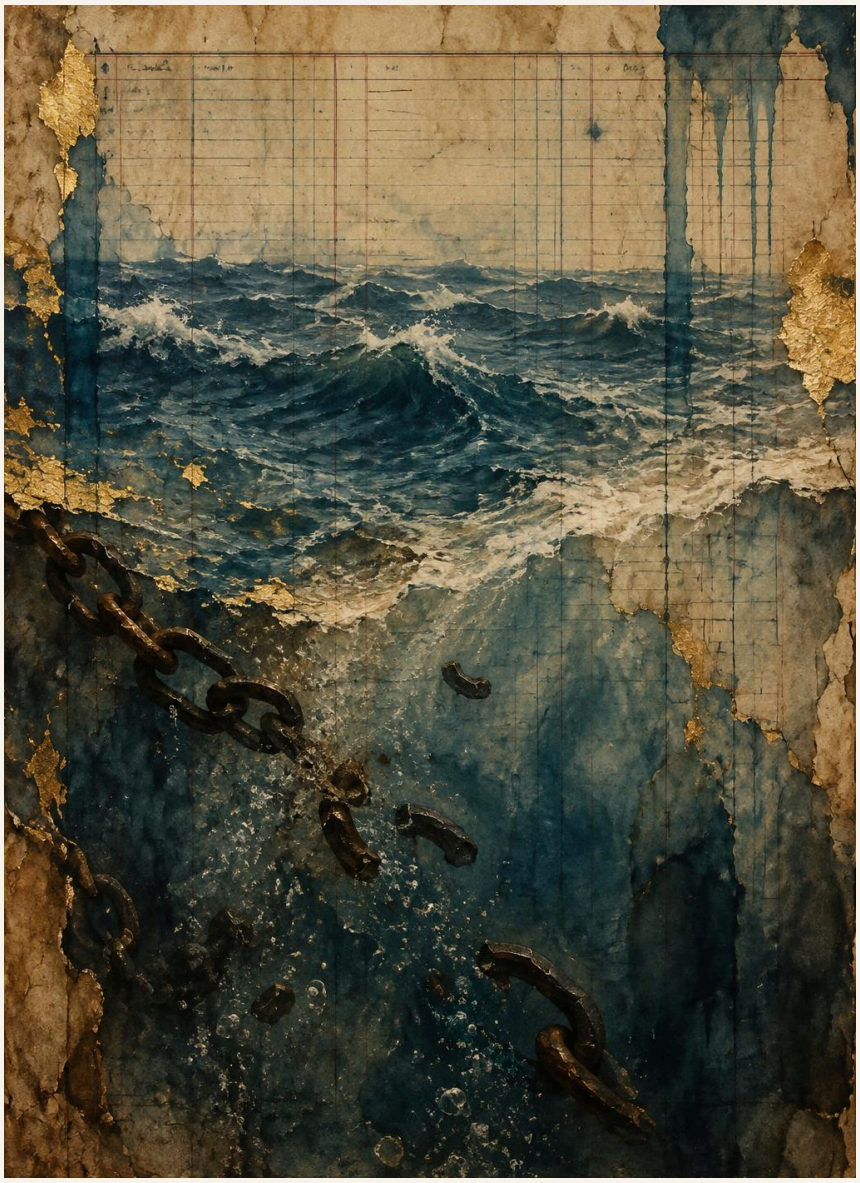
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New departmental features are documentary essays drawn from the public records listed with each piece. No interview is represented as having taken place for those essays. Institutional statements and company histories are attributed to their publishers.

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In WHO DECIDES WHAT REPAIR MEANS?, *on page 114*
ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR PEARCEROBINSON.COM

A magazine offers room to put decisions alongside their consequences. A parliamentary vote can be read against the powers it creates. An international visit can be followed into a financing agreement. A proposal for a new waterfront can be examined beside the city that already occupies the ground. The space available here is intended for those connections.

This first edition brings together reporting already published by PearceRobinson.com and new documentary essays on enterprise, opportunity, the economy and cultural inheritance. Existing articles keep their original words and dates; readers can follow their sources and return to the first publication. The new essays identify the records on which they depend.



In THE AUTHORITY TO REPAIR, *on page 123*
PHOTOGRAPH SUPPLIED BY PEARCE ROBINSON · PHOTOGRAPHER NOT IDENTIFIED

The Caribbean is the publication's foundation, while the questions extend beyond it. Borrowing costs, maritime security, public procurement, training and trade involve institutions whose decisions cross national borders. People living in small states have a substantial interest in understanding those institutions and in being heard by them.

Mia Mottley's feature occupies the centre of that international conversation. The magazine follows her programme without treating access to a summit as a finished result. The wider issue applies the same attention to companies, colleges, public bodies and cultural institutions: what has been established, what remains proposed and what evidence can tell us about the difference.

Pearce Robinson

PEARCE ROBINSON
Editor & publisher



PEARCE ROBINSON

PEARCE ROBINSON, *journalist and publisher of* PEARCEROBINSON.COM. OFFICIAL *portrait.*

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THE QUESTIONS BETWEEN ELECTIONS

An election gives a government authority to govern, but many of its most consequential decisions are taken afterwards, in contracts, regulations, administrative instructions and choices about enforcement. The public's opportunity to understand those choices depends on records, institutions and people willing to explain what happened.

A reader may approach the same decision as a taxpayer, an employee, a parent or a business owner. A procurement rule determines how public money is used, while a training programme influences who can obtain skilled work. A port investment affects commerce and a neighbourhood. Bringing those perspectives together makes an issue of government more intelligible.

The magazine's departments are arranged around those connections. The business feature considers how an enterprise survives its founders. The education feature examines the institutions through which opportunity is organised. The heritage essay follows the work of preserving a practice beyond the generation that created it.

Independent journalism earns its place by pursuing evidence even when the story becomes inconvenient or less dramatic than the original announcement. A plan may advance; it may stall; the documents may disclose a different purpose or a different cost. Each possibility deserves a fair account.

A CARIBBEAN PUBLICATION, AN INTERNATIONAL READER

Small countries experience the international system in concrete ways. A lender's conditions reach a public budget. A shipping delay reaches a shop. A security operation reaches the waters used by fishermen. Decisions taken in distant capitals acquire local meaning through the people and institutions that must respond to them.

The international reporting in this issue follows that movement. The Mottley feature connects reform proposals to separate borrowing transactions, maintaining the currencies, purposes and status of each. The Caribbean security reprint preserves the date and attribution of the records it discussed. The economic essay considers the institutional work required to make regional integration useful.

A publication rooted in the Caribbean can offer an international audience more than an account of reactions to decisions made elsewhere. It can explain the policy arguments, institutions, commercial histories and cultural practices produced within the region, giving readers the evidence needed to understand them on their own terms.

The intention is a magazine in which a reader arriving for one subject can discover several others worth following. Enterprise belongs beside diplomacy because both depend on relationships that must survive changing circumstances. Heritage belongs beside development because the character of a place is part of what its future must consider.

THE WORK AFTER PUBLICATION

Publication makes an account available for scrutiny. Readers can question an interpretation, point to a missing record or identify a mistake. Institutions can respond to the evidence and people affected by a story can explain their experience. Those exchanges are part of journalism's continuing responsibility.

The Document Room keeps the numbered references on the site, separating the newsroom's source summaries from the external publications to which they refer. Original documents remain the work of their issuing institutions. A source entry provides context and a route to that work; it does not transfer ownership to this magazine.

Photography carries a separate record of attribution and reuse terms. The commissioned cover portrait is identified as such, while documentary photographs retain their photographers' and institutions' credits. Advertising imagery belongs to its own pages and is not presented as documentary evidence for an editorial claim.

The closing pages return to those methods. This magazine is intended to be read in full, but also to be used: a reader should be able to move from a paragraph to its evidence, from a reprint to its original publication and from an invitation to the part of the publication it concerns.



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THE INSTITUTIONS OF PUBLIC LIFE *on page 12*

The RED HOUSE, *seat of* PARLIAMENT, PORT *of* SPAIN.

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PEARCE ROBINSON, *independent journalist and investigative reporter.*
PEARCE ROBINSON · AUTHOR PORTRAIT

PRESS FREEDOM IS NOT A PRIVILEGE FOR JOURNALISTS — IT IS A PROTECTION FOR THE PUBLIC

Press freedom is not about protecting journalists from scrutiny. It is about preserving the public's ability to scrutinise power – particularly when STATE *authority expands and independent safeguards are weakened.*

By PEARCE ROBINSON

First published SEP. 25, 2026 · Original publication

Press freedom is not a special privilege for journalists. It protects the public's right to know what governments, public institutions, corporations and other centres of power are doing in their name. When journalists can investigate, question, challenge and publish without improper interference, citizens can better understand how decisions are made, how public money is spent and whether those in authority are acting lawfully and responsibly.

A functioning democracy requires more than elections. It requires scrutiny between elections. Governments control policing, national security, taxation, public spending, regulation and the daily operation of the State, much of which happens beyond the immediate view of ordinary citizens. Journalism brings those actions into public view. That is why an independent press will always make people in power uncomfortable. Serious journalism does not exist simply to repeat official statements. It exists to test them.

▶ Sources for this page

"Information in these areas is often difficult to obtain and insiders may be the only people able to alert the public to wrongdoing that deserves investigation."

This is especially important when journalism concerns national security, corruption, public administration, policing, procurement or misconduct within State institutions. Information in these areas is often difficult to obtain and insiders may be the only people able to alert the public to wrongdoing that deserves investigation. The protection of confidential journalistic sources is therefore not some professional courtesy between a reporter and a source. It is part of the infrastructure that allows information of genuine public importance to reach society. If people with evidence of wrongdoing believe that speaking to a journalist will expose them, many will remain silent. The result is fewer disclosures, fewer investigations and less accountability. That is why interference with journalistic material and confidential sources must be subject to strict safeguards.

▶ Sources for this page

"It is not only when a journalist is stopped from publishing, but when the consequences of publication become so burdensome that journalists decide not to investigate at all."

Press freedom also requires proportionality. Journalists are not above the law and freedom of expression does not remove legal responsibility. Defamation law, privacy law, contempt rules and legitimate national-security protections all have a place. But those laws must not operate in a way that makes public-interest reporting practically impossible. When the financial or legal consequences of reporting become so severe that journalists, editors and small independent outlets cannot afford to investigate powerful people or institutions, the damage reaches far beyond one newsroom. That is the chilling effect. It is not only when a journalist is stopped from publishing, but when the consequences of publication become so burdensome that journalists decide not to investigate at all. A country can formally protect freedom of expression while creating conditions in which meaningful investigative journalism becomes increasingly difficult to practise.

▶ Sources for this page

"A system that effectively protects only those wealthy enough to withstand litigation or prolonged legal pressure does not provide meaningful press freedom."

Independent journalists are particularly exposed. Large media organisations may have legal departments, insurance, financial reserves and institutional support. Independent reporters often do not. Yet some of the most important journalism begins at that level: local investigations, confidential disclosures, specialised reporting and stories that larger organisations may overlook. A system that effectively protects only those wealthy enough to withstand litigation or prolonged legal pressure does not provide meaningful press freedom.

The public must also understand what responsible journalism requires. It means making genuine efforts to verify information, seeking responses, examining documents, protecting legitimate sources and treating matters of public interest seriously and fairly. Journalists must themselves be open to scrutiny; accuracy, fairness and accountability strengthen journalism. But challenging a report is very different from creating conditions in which journalists become afraid to ask the questions in the first place. The strongest democracies are not those in which governments and journalists agree. They are those in which institutions can be questioned, officials can respond, journalists can investigate and courts can resolve disputes while preserving the importance of public-interest expression.

▶ Sources for this page

"Fighting violent crime is an urgent responsibility of the STATE, *but significant operational powers must come with equally serious safeguards."*

That is where the present debate in Trinidad and Tobago becomes especially important. The Special Operations Bill, 2026 has cleared both Houses of Parliament, passing its third reading in the Senate by 16 votes to 15. The legislation creates a framework for special police operations, including operations involving Defence Force assistance. The Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago raised serious concerns about Clause 15 because, while the legislation protects legal professional privilege and refers to tools of a lawful trade or business, it does not expressly identify journalism or specifically protect journalists' devices, material or confidential-source information. MATT called for explicit protection and High Court oversight when confidential journalistic material is encountered.[1]

That concern is central to my opposition to the legislation in its present form. Fighting violent crime is an urgent responsibility of the State, but significant operational powers must come with equally serious safeguards. A journalist's phone may contain years of conversations with whistleblowers. A laptop may contain unpublished investigations. A notebook may identify a public servant who disclosed wrongdoing because that person believed a journalist would protect his or her identity. Once that confidentiality is destroyed, it cannot simply be restored.

▶ Sources for this page

"But efficiency cannot become a substitute for accountability, and speed cannot be purchased by weakening the institutions created to scrutinise how public money is spent."

The same principle applies to what is happening with public procurement. Parliament has been considering major changes to the country's procurement regime, including amendments affecting the operation and reach of the Office of Procurement Regulation. The Government argues that the reforms will remove unnecessary rigidity, speed up delivery and create more opportunities. But efficiency cannot become a substitute for accountability, and speed cannot be purchased by weakening the institutions created to scrutinise how public money is spent. That is why I am equally opposed to gutting the effectiveness of the OPR. Procurement oversight matters precisely because taxpayers have a right to know how contracts are awarded, how public resources are used and whether the system is operating fairly.

These developments cannot be viewed in isolation. When the powers available to the State expand while independent safeguards and oversight mechanisms are weakened, scrutiny becomes more important, not less. That is why I oppose the Special Operations framework without stronger protections for fundamental freedoms, including explicit protection for journalists and confidential sources, and why I oppose measures that diminish the ability of the Office of Procurement Regulation to provide meaningful independent oversight.

▶ Sources for this page

"Eventually, citizens discover that fewer people and fewer institutions are capable of finding out what happened, challenging what happened or telling them what happened."

This is ultimately why the Fourth Estate matters. When institutional safeguards fail, somebody still has to ask where the money went, examine the procurement decision, speak to the public servant who believes something improper has happened, investigate an abuse of authority, preserve the evidence and ask the question nobody inside the institution is prepared to ask publicly. Independent journalists increasingly stand in that gap.

We do not possess the coercive powers of the State. We do not award public contracts, command police officers, control public expenditure or write legislation. Our instruments are questions, documents, sources, evidence and publication. That is precisely why we must remain free to use them. The erosion of accountability rarely arrives in one dramatic moment. It happens incrementally: one safeguard weakened, one exemption widened, one source frightened into silence and one journalist deciding that an investigation is too dangerous or too financially ruinous to pursue. Eventually, citizens discover that fewer people and fewer institutions are capable of finding out what happened, challenging what happened or telling them what happened.

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"When independent journalists can investigate powerful institutions without disproportionate fear of retaliation, the main beneficiary is not the journalist."

Press freedom is therefore about power. It is about whether citizens can examine the institutions that govern them, whether journalists can investigate matters those institutions would prefer to keep private and whether people with information of genuine public importance can speak without automatically being exposed. Protecting journalism does not weaken government; it strengthens democratic accountability. Protecting confidential sources does not protect wrongdoing; it protects the possibility of discovering wrongdoing. When independent journalists can investigate powerful institutions without disproportionate fear of retaliation, the main beneficiary is not the journalist. It is the public.

The defence of press freedom is therefore not a sectional concern belonging only to reporters or media organisations. It is part of the defence of accountable government itself.

▶ Sources for this page



INTERLUDE · TRINIDAD

Caroni, at dusk

Each evening the scarlet ibis return to the mangroves of the Caroni Swamp, the national bird crossing the sky in a single moving line of red.

OIL ON CANVAS, IN THE MANNER OF THE ISLAND. ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR PEARCEROBINSON.COM



THE SEARCHLIGHT AND THE SEA *on page 22*

Opening artwork for "Who COMMANDS *the* CARIBBEAN?".

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WHO COMMANDS THE CARIBBEAN?

America's campaign against alleged drug boats has tested the boundary between policing and war, and divided the governments living closest to it. For the CARIBBEAN, *the defence of sovereignty now begins with a harder question: whose security counts?*

By PEARCE ROBINSON · *Analysis*

THE SEA BETWEEN

The first question is who gets to name the people in the boat. On 2 September 2025, the United States announced a strike that killed eleven people between Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago. Washington described its targets as traffickers. By November 2026, that same attack had entered an American impeachment resolution, while the Trinidad Express reported that the dead likely came from San Juan de Unare, a Venezuelan coastal fishing town. The distance between those descriptions — an enemy target, a constitutional controversy, a community's missing men — is the distance the Caribbean has been forced to navigate.[1]

What began as a campaign against alleged drug vessels became something much larger. The United States assembled a formidable naval presence, extended its strikes into the eastern Pacific and eventually carried out the January 2026 operation that removed Nicolás Maduro from Venezuela. These developments belong to the same political history, but they should not be collapsed into a single operation with a single legal explanation. Maritime interdiction, lethal targeting and the forcible removal of a foreign president raise different questions. Treating them as interchangeable is precisely how the limits on each can disappear.[1, 2]

For Caribbean governments, the argument has never been conducted at a comfortable distance. Trinidad and Tobago opened its airports to American military aircraft in December 2025, according to the Express, while its government has repeatedly denied involvement in the boat strikes or Maduro's extraction. Granting access does not establish participation in a particular attack. It does establish a sovereign decision to assist a deployment whose purposes extended well beyond ordinary policing. Persad-Bissessar's government cannot answer questions about that strategic choice merely by denying that it carried out the strikes itself.[1]

The latest verified position at this edition's 14 November 2026 deadline offers no neat resolution. PBS reported on 13 November that Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth had escaped an impeachment vote in the House, although another effort could follow under the incoming Democratic-controlled Congress. That is a development in political accountability, not a judicial ruling on the strikes. The regional question remains more durable than any Washington vote: whether security cooperation can be kept within rules that protect Caribbean people, including those whom a powerful ally suspects of breaking the law.[12]

▶ Sources for this page

AN ARMADA'S ARGUMENT

The build-up changed the meaning of the counter-narcotics campaign before it changed Venezuela's leadership. By late November 2025, the Guardian described the largest American military presence in the Caribbean since the 1989 invasion of Panama: more than a dozen warships and roughly 15,000 personnel. The USS Gerald R Ford carrier group brought capabilities far beyond the familiar image of a coastguard cutter stopping a suspicious launch. Washington presented the deployment through the language of drugs and security. Its scale also created options for coercion against a government on land.[3]

The distinction between capability and declared purpose is essential. A carrier does not prove that every subsequent mission was planned from the outset; nor does an anti-trafficking label explain why so much striking power was required. Large deployments communicate to several audiences simultaneously: adversaries, allied governments, domestic voters and the forces expected to execute orders. For small neighbouring states, that ambiguity is itself a security problem. They must make practical decisions about ports, airspace and cooperation without necessarily knowing which future use of the force those decisions might enable.[3, 4]

The geography of support made the campaign regional rather than simply bilateral. CNN reported in November 2025 that Trinidad and Tobago hosted exercises with American Marines, while the destroyer USS Gravely had conducted drills there in October. Puerto Rico supplied another crucial platform: imagery showed activity at the former Roosevelt Roads naval station, and Marines had practised amphibious landings in the archipelago. Across the wider theatre, governments offered different degrees of assistance. Cooperation was a spectrum, not a coalition whose members had all signed the same public mandate.[4]

The expanding map of the boat strikes complicates the accounting, too. Reuters' December 2025 visual investigation recorded attacks near Venezuela and in the eastern Pacific, reporting at least 87 deaths across 22 strikes at that point. Later totals therefore cannot honestly be presented as Caribbean deaths alone. Nor should a historical running count become a definitive figure for November 2026. The more important continuity is methodological: military destruction displaced the prospect of boarding, arrest and a trial, while outsiders were left to assess targeting claims through a limited public record.[2]

▶ Sources for this page

A COMMUNITY DIVIDED

CARICOM's clearest collective statement exposed the fracture within it. On 18 October 2025, heads of government reaffirmed the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, supported sovereignty and territorial integrity, and insisted that fighting narcotrafficking and illegal arms trafficking should proceed through cooperation within international law. The statement expressly recorded that Trinidad and Tobago reserved its position. That reservation should not be softened into an incidental disagreement. It marked a difference over the practical relationship between the region's security needs and the means its most powerful partner was employing.[5]

Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar had already made her preference unmistakable. After the first strike, she welcomed the American deployment's reported success and called for traffickers to be killed violently, CNN reported. Welcoming lethal force before the public could examine the identities of the dead or the basis for targeting them was reckless leadership. Organised crime and illicit weapons threaten the region; CARICOM expressly acknowledged both. Neither threat establishes that everyone aboard a particular boat was a trafficker, nor makes killing a suspect necessary and lawful. Her response substituted enthusiasm for the obligations of evidence, restraint and accountability that Caribbean security requires.[4, 5]

"She called for the sharing of intelligence where an immediate national threat was claimed, and invoked the UNITED NATIONS' *responsibility for international security."*

Guyana also backed the deployment, but its stated formulation deserves to be read on its own terms. CNN reported support for a collaborative, integrated approach to transnational organised crime and a November visit by the head of US Southern Command. Endorsing security cooperation is not automatically an endorsement of every targeting decision, still less proof of operational involvement. A responsible regional account must preserve those distinctions. Otherwise, differing national policies become a misleading roll-call of states supposedly for or against everything Washington has done.[4]

Barbados offered a sharper challenge. In an October 2025 address reported by Stabroek News, Prime Minister Mia Mottley argued that Caribbean leaders should not accept unsupported American assertions that those being killed represented threats. She called for the sharing of intelligence where an immediate national threat was claimed, and invoked the United Nations' responsibility for international security. Her intervention made a small-state demand of a large-state operation: if neighbouring countries were expected to live with the consequences, they should not be asked to substitute trust for an explanation.[6]

▶ Sources for this page

WHAT PEACE REQUIRES

The Zone of Peace is most useful when read as a discipline on conduct rather than a flattering description of existing conditions. CARICOM's October statement did not pretend the Caribbean lacked violence. It explicitly recognised narcotrafficking and the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons as threats. Its prescription was lawful international cooperation alongside dialogue and peaceful dispute resolution. On that reading, the doctrine does not require governments to choose between public safety and restraint. It requires them to explain how security measures satisfy both obligations at once.[5]

This matters because the rival argument can be made to sound devastatingly practical: a region suffering from organised crime cannot seriously call itself peaceful. But a normative commitment is not disproved by the problem it seeks to contain. The presence of trafficking strengthens the case for capable institutions; it does not independently determine the permissible level of force. Mottley's insistence on evidence addresses precisely that gap. Without it, the political urgency of confronting criminal networks can become an all-purpose authorisation for measures whose actual targets remain insufficiently explained.[5, 6]

January 2026 tested the doctrine beyond the water. Following American military action in Venezuela, CARICOM's bureau reaffirmed sovereignty, territorial integrity and human dignity, calling for peaceful dialogue to secure stability, good governance and democracy. It also identified the immediate safety of Caribbean citizens and consequences for economic activity, particularly air travel, as concerns. Those sentences brought the abstract and the practical together. A breach or threatened breach of regional order is experienced not only in diplomatic communiqués but through uncertainty over whether ordinary movement and business can continue.[7]

Belize's response supplied another register of Caribbean concern. Its foreign ministry said it had watched the southern Caribbean military build-up for four months, aligned itself with the CARICOM bureau and called for restraint and respect for Venezuela's constitutional order and its people's will. It also confirmed that Belizean students studying in Venezuela were safe in Belize. The juxtaposition is revealing. The language of sovereignty was accompanied by a government's account of identifiable citizens. For a small state, international law is most persuasive when it can be connected to the people whose safety it is meant to secure.[8]

▶ Sources for this page

THE LAW AT SEA

Washington's central legal claim has been that it is acting against narco-terrorists in an armed conflict, rather than conducting ordinary criminal enforcement. In September 2026, the BBC reported that President Donald Trump had notified Congress of a non-international armed conflict with designated terrorist organisations. Ben Saul, the UN special rapporteur on human rights and counterterrorism, rejected the premise that the identified circumstances justified the strikes. His assessment is an expert finding within the UN human rights system. It is not a criminal conviction or a judgment delivered after a trial.[9]

The distinction has enormous consequences. Under the administration's framing, the identity and role attributed to a person can place them within a military targeting framework. Under the law-enforcement approach defended in the expert assessment, the question is whether lethal force was strictly necessary to protect life. Suspicion of trafficking, even if accurate, cannot perform the same legal work as an imminent threat to life. Nor does the domestic designation of an organisation as terrorist automatically establish an armed conflict or give the United States an international right to kill its alleged members.[9, 10]

> *"In* SEPTEMBER *2026, the* BBC *reported that* PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP *had notified* CONGRESS *of a non-international armed conflict with designated terrorist organisations."*

Saul's September assessment addressed the available record through August 2026: at least 223 people reportedly killed in 68 attacks in the Caribbean and Pacific. He concluded that the attacks violated the right to life and identified reasonable grounds for considering them crimes against humanity. Those formulations require careful attribution. They express the rapporteur's legal assessment, not an adjudicated finding of individual guilt. The numerical cut-off also matters: those are figures for the period he examined, not an independently verified total current to this magazine's November deadline.[9, 10]

A competing legal position has circulated in Trinidad and Tobago. The Express reported in November that an opinion prepared for the government by British barrister Harish Salve reportedly justified the strikes as self-defence, while government officials had described them as consistent with international law. Reporting the existence of that advice does not resolve the disagreement or disclose every assumption behind it. The decisive questions remain whether the facts established the relevant threat and whether the claimed legal framework applied. A government's assurance that lawyers approved an operation cannot replace public scrutiny of those questions.[1]

▶ Sources for this page

THE MISSING NAMES

The most consequential gap in the campaign's public presentation is often the simplest: who died? Reuters reported in December 2025 that the United States alleged the destroyed boats were transporting drugs without presenting evidence, while relatives, foreign leaders, legislators and legal experts demanded proof. That does not establish that every vessel was innocent. It establishes a burden the public record had not met. The distinction protects serious reporting from two opposing mistakes: accepting an official label as a verdict, and answering an unproven allegation with an equally unproven declaration of innocence.[2]

In Trinidad and Tobago, that gap has acquired names. The Trinidad Express reported in September 2026 that relatives of Chad Joseph and Rishi Samaroo believed the men were aboard a vessel struck on 14 October 2025, when the United States said six people had been killed. Their families' lawsuit, Burnley v United States, alleges that the men were unlawfully killed. The report described them as fishermen returning from Venezuela. Their presence aboard the targeted boat and the circumstances of their deaths must remain attributed to the family account and litigation, rather than treated as established judicial facts.[11]

The same report described an obstacle that rarely appears in the military imagery: proceedings were awaiting a local court determination declaring the men legally dead so that relatives could administer their estates. An American Civil Liberties Union lawyer representing the families told the paper that the United States had sought a stay pending those proceedings. That was the reported September position, not a claim that the case remained unchanged in November. It nevertheless captures a profound asymmetry. A strike can be announced immediately; establishing a death in forms recognised by different legal systems may take far longer.[11]

For coastal communities, the responsible question is wider than whether any single family's account ultimately succeeds. What information would enable a fisherman to distinguish a legitimate journey from conduct that might trigger lethal suspicion? What channel would allow relatives to challenge a mistaken identification? These are demands for an intelligible security system, not assertions that all fishing activity is free of criminal involvement. The reported cases show why naming, notification and a route to remedy belong inside the assessment of regional security, rather than being deferred until after its military objectives have been declared achieved.[2, 11]

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AFTER THE EXTRACTION

The removal of Maduro in January changed the political landscape without answering the legal questions about the boats. The Express's November account records the American operation and Trinidad and Tobago's repeated denial of involvement, alongside Persad-Bissessar's public hope that Venezuelans would move towards democracy, justice and prosperity. Invoking those aspirations cannot justify the means by which a stronger state removes a neighbouring government. The legal limits exist partly to protect small countries from having their sovereignty made conditional on another capital's preferred outcome. Her rhetoric left that protection dangerously subordinate to approval of American power.[1, 7]

CARICOM's response is significant for what it kept in the same frame: sovereignty and territorial integrity alongside democracy and human dignity. That pairing rejects the idea that the region must choose between indifference to Venezuelans' political rights and indifference to the rules governing external intervention. It also offers a standard that should survive changes in government. A Caribbean security doctrine cannot depend on whether leaders like the administration facing pressure. Otherwise, the protection available to a small state would shrink whenever a stronger power judged its politics unacceptable.[7]

"That pairing rejects the idea that the region must choose between indifference to VENEZUELANS' *political rights and indifference to the rules governing external intervention."*

The persistence of the legal controversy into September demonstrates that the maritime campaign cannot be reduced to an overture to Maduro's removal. The BBC reported an American announcement of another Caribbean strike, killing four people, two days before Saul's assessment became public on 21 September. Southern Command asserted that intelligence confirmed the vessel's involvement in narcotrafficking. The contrast is stark but must be precisely stated: the military claimed operational justification; the rapporteur disputed the legal basis of the wider campaign. Neither account should be silently converted into the other's conceded premise.[9]

November brought an attempt to move the argument into American constitutional accountability. The Express reported that articles introduced against Hegseth cited both the boat strikes and the operation in Venezuela; PBS subsequently reported that he had escaped an impeachment vote. Allegations in such a resolution are allegations, not findings of criminal responsibility. Equally, avoiding a vote is not legal vindication. Caribbean governments should read Washington's proceedings as one possible source of scrutiny, without assuming that their citizens' rights will be secured by the timetable or partisan arithmetic of another country's legislature.[1, 12]

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TERMS OF SECURITY

Persad-Bissessar's course has put the Caribbean in danger by weakening the collective insistence that security cooperation be bounded by law. Trinidad and Tobago's reservation from CARICOM's October statement, her welcome for lethal targeting and the subsequent grant of military access show how that weakening took political and practical form. This is a judgement about those documented choices, not an allegation that her government directed a particular strike. The alternative is already present in CARICOM's formulation: oppose trafficking and illicit weapons, protect sovereignty and livelihoods, and insist that cooperation remain within international law. Requests for access should be tested against permitted missions, applicable law and the host government's responsibilities before assistance is offered.[1, 4, 5]

Evidence should sit at the centre of that bargain. Mottley's call for intelligence to be shared where an immediate threat is asserted identifies the minimum political respect due to neighbouring states. Governments need not demand that sensitive sources be exposed to recognise the inadequacy of an unexplained conclusion. They can require a meaningful account of the legal basis for operations they assist, and insist on mechanisms for investigating credible reports of civilian harm. Such conditions would make cooperation more defensible, including to Caribbean citizens who want a forceful response to organised crime.[6]

The families' litigation points towards an equally important measure of performance. A regional security arrangement should be judged partly by whether someone with little money, no body to bury and no access to classified intelligence can obtain an answer. Counting destroyed vessels may describe activity; it cannot, by itself, establish lawful targeting or public safety. Nor should Caribbean leaders outsource every difficult question to American courts. The reported experience of Joseph's and Samaroo's relatives shows why local legal institutions and diplomatic representation matter even when the challenged use of force took place beyond national shores.[11]

As November 2026 closes the magazine's reporting window, there is no verified basis here for declaring the campaign ended, giving an exact current death toll or treating the legal dispute as settled. There is a firmer conclusion. The security of the southern Caribbean cannot be measured solely by the reach of the forces deployed within it. It also depends on whether governments retain the capacity to demand reasons, refuse unlawful methods and protect people whose names never appear in a military briefing. A Zone of Peace earns its meaning when those obligations become terms of cooperation rather than qualifications whispered afterwards.[5, 9, 12]

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MIA MOTTLEY

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MIA MOTTLEY

the power of a small nation in a changing world

Barbados has fewer than 300,000 people. Its PRIME MINISTER *has spent eight years at the tables where the rules of global finance, climate and security are written. How did she get there, and what does it mean at home?*

By PEARCE ROBINSON

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At Al Husseiniya Palace in Amman on 9 November, King Abdullah II received the prime minister of an island whose population the World Bank puts at 282,623. The account published by Jordan's news agency recorded discussions on water, healthcare, renewable energy, tourism, investment and defence. It also placed the next stage of the relationship in the Caribbean: an upcoming round of Aqaba Process meetings, planned for Barbados in 2027.[9, 18]

Mia Amor Mottley arrived with a diplomatic programme already extending across several continents. In the seven weeks before Amman she addressed the UN General Assembly, appeared at the Council on Foreign Relations and spoke to the vulnerable-country finance ministers of the V20, whose leadership she said had asked Barbados to continue its presidency for another year. Earlier in 2026 she had held talks at Downing Street, addressed a methane meeting in Paris and joined the reparatory-justice conference in Accra. Climate finance, public services and the security of small states connected those appearances.[7, 8, 27, 10, 13, 15]

I. THE DIPLOMACY OF DISPROPORTIONATE INFLUENCE

Mottley became Prime Minister on 25 May 2018, when the Barbados Labour Party won every seat in the House of Assembly. She did it again on 19 January 2022, and a third time on 11 February 2026. Three clean sweeps have given her something few democratic leaders possess: a parliament with no elected opposition and an unusually emphatic electoral mandate.[1, 2, 3]

During her premiership, Barbados removed the British monarch as head of state. At midnight on 30 November 2021 Barbados became a republic, with Sandra Mason sworn in as its first president while the Prince of Wales watched from the audience. The ceremony announced a country that intended to set its own terms, and it made Mottley's name familiar well beyond the region. TIME put her on its cover the following May.[4, 29]

Barbados's limited economic and military scale makes coalition-building central to its foreign policy. Mottley has used that position to press a wider case: that international financial arrangements expose climate-vulnerable countries to borrowing costs and recovery obligations poorly matched to the shocks they face. The Bridgetown proposals turn that argument into demands on creditors and development institutions, giving other governments something concrete to support.[6, 8]

Long before Bridgetown became the name of a financing campaign, Mottley was explaining sovereignty in personal terms. In Gary Younge's 2021 interview for British Vogue, conducted at Ilaro Court before the transition to a republic, she described the change as an assertion that every Barbadian child should be able to aspire to become head of state. "The one luxury I don't have is to remain static," she told him. That interview caught a prime minister intent on changing her country's sense of what it could become; the subsequent republic and financing transactions give that ambition a record against which it can now be judged.[33, 4, 21]

Her own formation crossed the boundaries she now negotiates. Younge's profile recorded her childhood connection to New York, attendance at the United Nations International School and legal studies at the London School of Economics. Born in 1965, a year before Barbados's independence, she grew up with a politically influential family and later worked alongside the generation that built the independent state. She described herself to Younge as a "bridge". The word captures a career joining the independence generation's assertion of nationhood to a later demand for influence over the international institutions that constrain it.[33]

For Barbados, a place at those tables is an instrument of national policy. The island cannot dictate the terms on which international banks lend, compel a larger country to reduce its emissions or buy its way out of a regional security crisis. It can, however, bring other vulnerable governments into the same argument and make it harder for institutions to treat each country's predicament as an isolated exception. Bridgetown gave that coalition a programme around which to organise. The importance of the name was that it moved the centre of the discussion away from the institutions being asked to change.[5, 6]

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MIA MOTTLEY

Geneva · 10 SEPTEMBER *2019* · RAÚL PREBISCH LECTURE

JEAN-PHILIPPE ESCARD / UNCTAD · CC BY 2.0 · PHOTOGRAPH RECORD · REUSE LICENCE



Glasgow · 1 NOVEMBER *2021 · Before the* COP26 *world leaders' opening ceremony*
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, BARBADOS · PUBLIC DOMAIN · LICENCE

The republic carried a similar message about agency. The office of prime minister remained, and the transition did not create an entirely new system of government; it replaced a distant hereditary head of state with a Barbadian president. Sandra Mason's inauguration supplied a visible expression of sovereignty to accompany Mottley's demands abroad. To read every subsequent diplomatic success back into that ceremony would exaggerate its reach. What it did provide was a clear answer to who represented the country, and whose consent its institutions were supposed to serve.[4]

Her successive victories also make the distinction between popularity and institutional strength unavoidable. Thirty seats out of thirty leave no doubt about the parliamentary outcome, but the scale of the victory cannot answer every question about the exercise of power. Abroad, continuity makes a leader a dependable negotiating partner. At home, the same continuity requires independent institutions capable of questioning a government which is unlikely to face resistance on the floor of the elected chamber. The electoral record is therefore both a source of her authority and part of the scrutiny her premiership invites.[2, 3, 26]

II. BRIDGETOWN AGAINST BRETTON WOODS

The Bridgetown Initiative took shape at a retreat in the Barbadian capital in July 2022 and was being set out publicly by that September, weeks before the climate summit at Sharm el-Sheikh. Its latest version, published in 2024 as Bridgetown 3.0, asks for larger and cheaper finance for development and climate resilience, clauses that pause debt payments after disasters, the rechannelling of IMF reserve assets, stronger lending from the multilateral banks and a reformed governance of the institutions themselves.[5, 6]

In April 2023 the World Bank lowered the share of equity it holds against its loans, a change it said would add about US$50 billion in lending over ten years. Bridgetown's organisers count that reform among the changes their campaign helped advance. The institutional chronology also shows initiatives with earlier origins: the IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Trust was approved in April 2022 and took effect on 1 May, before the Bridgetown retreat, while the World Bank's September announcement establishing the Pandemic Fund did not attribute it to Bridgetown. Mottley's contribution belongs in the coalition-building and pressure for reform; the published records do not support assigning every institutional change to one leader.[24, 5, 23, 30]

The argument has an advantage over most proposals from small states: Barbados tested it on itself first. After a sovereign restructuring in 2018 and 2019, the island went through an IMF programme that ended on 20 June 2025, when the Fund completed its fifth and final reviews and said the programme's broad objectives had been met.[19]

Barbados then used its own debt as an instrument of policy. In September 2022 a blue-bond conversion was expected to free about US$50 million for ocean conservation. In December 2024 the European Investment Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank guaranteed US$300 million in a refinancing that produced US$125 million in savings for water and sewerage. A third operation, a health and social swap built around a proposed BDS$1.2 billion buyback, was expected to release roughly BDS$320 million and was targeted for execution on 15 December. These are three separate deals, with different partners and purposes, and the newest has not yet closed.[22, 21, 20]

The 2024 transaction shows what a change in borrowing terms can mean beyond a financial announcement. The EIB describes a loan backed by two guarantees of US$150 million each, one from the IDB and one from the European bank. With that support, Barbados replaced more expensive obligations with longer-term local-currency finance arranged by CIBC Caribbean. The guarantees supported the lending; they were not US$300 million in unrestricted money handed to the government. The US$125 million figure describes fiscal savings generated by the refinancing, another category again.[21]

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Geneva · 10 SEPTEMBER *2019 · With* PAMELA COKE-HAMILTON *and* ISABELLE DURANT
TIMOTHY SULLIVAN / UNCTAD · CC BY-SA 2.0 · LICENCE

Those savings were intended to help upgrade the South Coast sewage treatment plant into a water reclamation facility and support associated infrastructure. The EIB's account connects the engineering to agricultural irrigation, groundwater recharge, reduced losses from the water system and less pollution reaching the sea. It is a practical chain: a cheaper financing structure makes room in the budget; that room supports investment; the investment is expected to improve the water on which food production, public health and the coast depend. Delivery has to be judged along that chain, rather than at the ceremony announcing the loan.[21]

The partnership extends beyond the refinancing. The EIB reported US$110 million in upfront funding from the IDB and Green Climate Fund for the project, including a US$40 million GCF grant. Those amounts describe project finance, separate from the debt guarantees and fiscal savings. For farmers, the intended value is reclaimed water suitable for irrigation; for households and the coast, it is a more reliable system with less groundwater and marine pollution. These are the outcomes the financing was designed to support, with construction and operational results still to be demonstrated.[21]

The loan also contains an obligation. Its sustainability targets relate to the volume and quality of the reclaimed water the upgraded plant produces. If those targets are missed, the EIB says, the government incurs a financial penalty paid into the Barbados Environmental Sustainability Fund. A debt conversion can reduce financing costs while leaving a demanding programme of construction and operational performance ahead of it. In this case, the connection between the financial instrument and the water project is written into the terms.[21]

The 2022 blue-bond conversion belongs to a different ledger. The Nature Conservancy's announcement described an operation expected to unlock around US$50 million for ocean conservation. It should not be used as another name for the later water-and-sewerage deal, nor as an extra pot that can simply be added to guarantees or buyback values. The proposed health transaction requires the same discipline: its BDS$1.2 billion buyback is the reported size of the operation, while roughly BDS$320 million is the amount it was expected to release. Reporting those numbers in their original currencies and categories gives readers a chance to see what Barbados actually negotiated.[22, 20, 21]

At the CFR meeting, Mottley described disaster clauses through the experience of Hurricane Beryl. She said Grenada had drawn on its clauses to create fiscal space after the storm, and estimated that an eligible event in Barbados could free space equivalent to about eighteen per cent of GDP over two years. That was her account of the protection available under the arrangements, not a sum Barbados had received. It explains why she returns to the clauses: recovery money that stays in a country's hands can matter as much as fresh finance arriving after a disaster.[8]

III. THE WORLD BEYOND WASHINGTON

Mottley's calendar this year describes a foreign policy that refuses to choose a single patron. On 4 May she gave an opening statement at the methane meeting France hosted at the Maison de la Chimie under its G7 presidency. On 18 June she was in Accra for the NEXT STEPS conference, where she and President John Dramani Mahama pressed a common African and Caribbean case for reparatory justice. A week later Keir Starmer received her at Downing Street during London Climate Action Week, for talks that covered super pollutants, organised crime and Caribbean security.[13, 14, 15, 10]

Her relationships in the Gulf go back further. She met Qatar's then foreign minister in New York in September 2022 to discuss energy, and its prime minister in Doha in December 2024. The Amman agenda this month included defence alongside water, healthcare and renewable energy, extending the publicly recorded range of cooperation discussions with partners in the region.[16, 17, 9]

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Washington · OCTOBER *2021* · *With* VICE PRESIDENT KAMALA HARRIS
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES · PUBLIC DOMAIN · LICENCE

The Jordanian account gives the Amman meeting a specific regional setting. Abdullah called for de-escalation and protection of the security and sovereignty of Arab states, and warned about Israel's actions in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza. Petra attributed those remarks to the King. Its report did not record Mottley making the same statement, and the shared meeting should not be read as agreement on every position expressed by her host.[9]

Mottley's own position on Israel and Palestine was stated publicly well before Amman. Addressing the General Assembly on 26 September 2025, she denounced disproportionate attacks on Palestinians while calling for the release of hostages. UN News recorded her insistence that the world must not ignore the horror in either Gaza or Sudan. In that speech, the protection of civilians formed part of the same case for international rules on which she says small states depend.[34]

She carried the argument beyond diplomatic language. Her closing image was a Palestinian girl, six or seven years old, walking through rubble with her sister on her shoulders. Mottley described a child in pain who had assumed the burden of taking them to safety, and asked governments with vastly greater resources to summon the same determination. The demands she put before the room were immediate: humanitarian funding for food, water and health, alongside the release of hostages and an end to disproportionate attacks. The speech placed Palestinian suffering before an audience accustomed to negotiating around it.[34]

Her challenge also reached the structure of international authority. At the same Assembly she objected to countries being summoned for votes and ceremonial photographs while excluded from decision-making. For a Caribbean government, that complaint links the Security Council to development finance: the countries most exposed to decisions made elsewhere have limited power over the institutions making them. Her criticism of Israel's conduct belongs to that wider demand that protection under international rules should not depend on the size of a country or the influence of its allies.[34, 6]

For Barbados, the planned Aqaba Process round offers a prospect of convening rather than simply attending. The readout places a future international security discussion in the island itself, alongside a broad bilateral agenda. The next evidence will be its dates, participants and decisions, and whether discussions on water, energy, healthcare or defence develop into defined arrangements. Amman already demonstrates access to a new negotiating setting; its longer-term value will depend on what that access enables.[9]

Washington remains the relationship that tests her most. When the United States acted in Venezuela on 3 January, Mottley consulted CARICOM counterparts and urged de-escalation. Small states, she said, "can only survive in the international rules-based order." It was a careful sentence, and it reflected her position exactly: a region dependent on American trade, security cooperation and remittances, led by someone who believes its safety lies in rules that bind the powerful as well.[28]

At the Council on Foreign Relations on 23 September, with Linda Thomas-Greenfield in the chair, the conversation turned to the succession at the United Nations. Mottley's answer was characteristic. "I have a country to run and a region to take care of, and I mean that with all sincerity," she said. Then, more drily: "Look, I'm not sure that the world wants somebody whose tongue might be as heavy as mine."[8]

The geography of these visits is also a catalogue of the problems Barbados must solve. Water and energy recur alongside investment and security; climate meetings lead into talks about organised crime; reparations are discussed as part of the resources available for development. Different hosts offer different partnerships. The official readouts do not establish that every conversation produced a signed agreement, and their published agendas should not be converted into claims of completed projects. They do establish a government seeking practical cooperation across several centres of power at once.[9, 10, 13, 16, 17]

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MIA MOTTLEY

UNCTAD15 · *4* OCTOBER *2021* · OPENING *plenary*

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20 SEPTEMBER *2023 · With* JAPAN'S *foreign minister* YOKO KAMIKAWA
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Accra places the Caribbean's financial demands inside a longer history. At the June conference, the Ghanaian presidency described Africa and the Caribbean building a common front for reparatory justice. Mottley's argument at CFR in September ran from slavery and colonial arrangements to present access to development. She rejected the suggestion that the purpose was to bankrupt another country, speaking instead of an intergenerational solution. Her reasoning was that the conditions under which wealth had been accumulated continued to shape which societies could finance the opportunities their people needed.[14, 15, 8]

The Africa relationship had already acquired a commercial structure before the Accra conference. At the inaugural AfriCaribbean Trade and Investment Forum in Bridgetown in September 2022, Mottley urged the two regions to build air bridges and cooperate on the problems constraining their development. Afreximbank's account recorded her warning that political cooperation alone would not reverse underdevelopment. Climate exposure, the pandemic, inflation and debt supplied the immediate reasons to bring the relationship into trade and finance.[35]

The Ethiopian relationship began well before the latest summit season. On 13 February 2025, Abiy Ahmed received Mottley for an official working visit to Addis Ababa. She returned in September, arriving alongside other Caribbean heads of government ahead of the second Africa–CARICOM Summit on 7 September. The programme included a reparations event and a joint meeting of African and Caribbean health ministers, placing historical justice and public services within the same interregional gathering.[40, 41]

The Ghana meetings carried that work into a more defined institutional programme. At the June 2026 Next Steps conference, President Mahama announced a Global Advisory Panel on Reparatory Justice, an Expert Panel on the Restitution of Cultural Artefacts and a Global Legal Panel on Reparatory Justice. The Ghanaian presidency described an agenda embracing research, education, memorialisation, restitution and legal pathways. In her CARICOM–Africa Day message in September, Mottley said she was honoured to serve on the advisory panel. The movement was building bodies through which governments and specialists could sustain the work beyond a summit.[45, 44]

Air travel gives the partnership a more immediate test. Air Peace touched down at Grantley Adams International Airport on 24 May 2026 on a direct flight from Lagos, according to The Nation's report the following day. Some passengers connected onward to Antigua on LIAT. The arrival gave a physical answer to Mottley's earlier call for air bridges, making an Africa–Caribbean crossing without a European or North American transfer visible at a Barbadian airport. The report establishes the flight; a current scheduled frequency and bookable timetable remain unverified.[43, 35]

Lagos and Accra belong to different parts of that account. The documented Air Peace arrival was from Nigeria, while Ghana hosted the reparatory-justice conference. The airline's landing should not be used to announce an operating nonstop Barbados–Accra route. Its potential value lies in the journeys it can enable for families, businesspeople and visitors, with the durability of that connection depending on passenger demand, schedules and viable onward links.[43, 14]

Healthcare supplies another public purpose for the relationship. In her September 2026 message, Mottley pointed to Ethiopian medical professionals strengthening healthcare at Queen Elizabeth Hospital. CBC reported the contribution alongside Air Peace and the African Trade Centre. Those examples bring the diplomatic programme closer to daily life: travel, treatment and the organisations through which trade can be financed. The report does not quantify staffing numbers or patient outcomes.[44]

▶ Sources for this page



September 2019 · With GEORGIAN PRESIDENT SALOME ZOURABICHVILI, *on the sidelines of the* UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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The newest Ethiopian engagement came on 11 November, two days after the Amman meeting. Mottley and Abiy held talks at COP31 in Antalya, Türkiye, on aviation cooperation and support for Ethiopia's COP32 presidency in 2027. ENA's readout records an aviation agenda, with no announcement of a new route or departure date. It shows the relationship continuing across international gatherings, joining air connectivity to the climate coalition in which Barbados already has a prominent role.[42]

On 4 August 2023, Afreximbank opened its CARICOM office in Barbados in the presence of Mottley and other Caribbean leaders. The bank reaffirmed a US$1.5 billion credit limit for eligible CARICOM states, providing a regional institution through which businesses and governments could pursue financing. That ceiling described credit available under the bank's arrangements, rather than money already disbursed to Barbados. The office brought an African lender's operations into the Caribbean and gave the partnership a permanent point of contact.[36]

A further commitment became visible on 24 March 2025, when the bank broke ground on a US$180 million African Trade Centre in Bridgetown, its first outside Africa. Barbados provided 6.4 acres at Jemmotts Lane. The bank's announcement described a future complex containing its CARICOM office, conference and exhibition facilities, a technology and small-business incubator and a digital trade gateway. Construction, occupancy and the business generated by the centre will determine how much of that ambition is realised. The land and groundbreaking already place the Africa–Caribbean relationship in the physical development of the Barbadian capital.[37]

Reparatory justice and trade therefore run through the same Atlantic relationship. The Accra conference pressed the historical claim; the Bridgetown office and planned trade centre created mechanisms for present economic cooperation. Mottley participates in a wider effort involving African governments, Afreximbank, CARICOM's institutions and other Caribbean leaders. Her contribution has been to put Barbados at several of its meeting points, giving the country a role in shaping an agenda larger than its own market.[14, 15, 36, 37]

Within CARICOM, the security argument is equally direct. In her September 2025 UN address, Mottley warned that the buildup of military assets by the United States and Venezuela could produce an accident that placed the southern Caribbean at disproportionate risk. Antoinette Connell's contemporaneous report in The Nation recorded her insistence that Caribbean countries should not be treated as collateral damage and that every state's territorial integrity should be respected. Her appeal for dialogue anticipated a regional problem: escalation could expose neighbouring islands to consequences they had neither chosen nor controlled.[39]

The consultation with CARICOM counterparts reported after US action in Venezuela in January 2026 continued that regional approach. Barbados's relationships with Washington, African partners and Arab states operate alongside its responsibilities within the Community. Mottley's international visibility gives her access, but regional authority depends on working with governments whose interests and alliances will not always coincide. Her most durable contribution would be arrangements that strengthen the Community's ability to negotiate and protect its members beyond any one leader's tenure.[28, 36, 9]

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GEORGETOWN, GUYANA · *20* NOVEMBER *2024* · BILATERAL *meeting with* INDIAN PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA · GOVERNMENT OPEN DATA LICENCE—INDIA · LICENCE

Her answer on the United Nations succession was unusually revealing about the relationship between the global platform and the domestic mandate. The questioner asked why she had chosen not to be a candidate for the first female secretary-general. After the line about her country and her region, she returned to the election in February and the work of securing prosperity. The response did not announce a candidacy. It located her responsibilities in Barbados and the Caribbean even while she was being invited to imagine a larger office.[8]

IV. THE MOTTLEY METHOD

The method is visible in how she speaks. She takes a technical subject, the capital ratios of development banks or the terms of a sovereign bond, and turns it into a question of fairness that a head of government can repeat. At the General Assembly on 24 September she applied it to technology. "Artificial intelligence is opening extraordinary possibilities in health, education, science and productivity," she said, "while also creating new risks of exclusion, exploitation, surveillance, and the distortion of truth." Then came the sentence that framed the rest: "And yet, the cooperation needed to confront these challenges is under strain."[7]

She also chooses her coalitions. As chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, she speaks for dozens of countries whose combined exposure to climate shocks dwarfs their economic weight, and in October the finance ministers of that group asked Barbados to lead them for an additional year. The honours have followed: a TIME Earth Award in 2025, the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity the same year and the ninety-ninth place on Forbes's list of the world's most powerful women.[27, 29, 1, 31]

The published agendas place Barbados's priorities in different negotiating settings: a planned Aqaba Process round in the Caribbean, cooperation on organised crime discussed in London, and a common reparations agenda advanced in Accra. Each relationship carries its own purpose, and each leaves a distinct record to follow beyond the visit.[9, 10, 14]

The transcript records her describing a wider negotiating coalition in concrete terms. Barbados, she said, chaired a V20 grouping that had grown from seventy-four to seventy-seven countries, and had met Arab partners to discuss development finance for education, health and water. The focus on schools, clinics and water mains placed public services at the centre of an international financing argument. The coalition's size gave the conversation weight, but its proposed uses made the weight politically intelligible: finance that is cheaper or available for longer can change what a government is able to build.[8]

This way of arguing travels because it joins the technical and the recognisable. Debt-service schedules and a clinic's budget appear on different desks, yet a government has to pay both from the same finite revenues. A hurricane that damages a port or a water system does not suspend the obligations owed to creditors. Mottley's proposals ask lenders to acknowledge that collision before a catastrophe, when terms can still be negotiated, rather than leaving a stricken country to seek relief after the event. The reform design makes disaster clauses one part of a broader effort to improve the volume, price and duration of finance.[6]

The awards recognise the reach of that case without settling its outcome. TIME's Earth Award records international recognition in 2025, and the Zayed honour places her work in another international setting. They help explain why foreign audiences know her name. They are not substitutes for examining the agreements, the borrowing conditions or the record of public services. Her claim to consequential leadership rests most strongly where the diplomacy can be followed into an institution's decision or a Barbadian project.[29, 1, 21]

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V. THE BARBADOS TEST

The harder question for any leader admired abroad is what her government looks like to the people who live under it. Barbados scores 94 out of 100 in Freedom House's 2026 assessment and is rated Free. The same report notes weaknesses in transparency and oversight, the areas where a parliament with no elected opposition is least able to help.[26]

That absence has consequences. On 27 February, Senator Ryan Walters criticised proposed constitutional changes against crossing the floor as "self-serving", arguing that they would consolidate party power. It is his allegation, not a finding, but it describes a real tension: when one party holds all thirty seats, the task of holding government to account passes to the Senate, the courts, the press and the public.[25]

Voters in February were not only thinking about Bridgetown. Fitch's assessment after the election noted that cost-of-living pressures and public security featured in the campaign, the ordinary preoccupations of a small open economy that imports most of what it consumes.[3]

The IMF's verdict, the debt operations and three consecutive landslides supply a substantial record for her government to defend. They also establish a standard against which the next promises can be measured: whether the health swap closes, what savings it produces, and how those resources are used in Barbados. A proposed financing structure becomes a public-health achievement only when its benefits reach the people it is intended to serve.[19, 20]

The Fund's June 2025 account gives a more detailed picture of the recovery than the fact of programme completion alone. It estimated growth of four per cent in 2024, driven by tourism, construction and business services; inflation had moderated to an annual average of 1.4 per cent. Reserves reached US$1.6 billion at the end of 2024, equivalent to more than seven months of imports. These are figures for the periods the IMF reported, not a description of every household's circumstances in November 2026.[19]

The same assessment said public debt had fallen below 105 per cent of GDP and recorded the authorities' commitment to bring it down to sixty per cent by the 2035–36 financial year. It also warned of downside risks from an uncertain external environment and natural disasters. Barbados could therefore show a programme meeting its targets while remaining exposed to forces that its government could not control. Mottley's international argument draws much of its force from that coexistence: fiscal discipline does not remove the vulnerability of a small economy.[19]

Freedom House's high score provides an important frame for the domestic debate. Barbados is assessed as a free country, not as a state without democratic institutions. Its concerns about transparency and oversight nonetheless deserve to be read alongside the parliamentary arithmetic. An opposition senator's objection to floor-crossing proposals is one entry in that debate, requiring attribution and examination of the proposal rather than adoption of his accusation as a verdict. Strong electoral support and meaningful scrutiny can coexist; the government's record needs both to be understood.[26, 25]

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For the Caribbean, the practical interest in Mottley's approach extends beyond whether other governments agree with every position she takes. Her programme puts the terms of participation in the international system on the agenda: who can borrow affordably, how quickly a country can recover from a disaster, and whether small states have enough influence over the institutions on which they depend. Those questions reach Trinidad and Tobago as well as Barbados. The two economies have different resources and vulnerabilities, but neither can determine the rules of international lending or regional security on its own.[6, 28]

The next phase of the record will come from decisions made after the summits. The health swap's completion and terms will determine the resources available to public services. Water-project reports will show progress against construction and performance commitments. The final text of parliamentary proposals will establish how political power is regulated. Together, those records will reveal how far international ambition has changed the institutions and services on which Barbadians depend.[20, 21, 25]

There is a reason the water operation is so central to that assessment. It reaches across the categories in which international institutions often divide their work: finance, food, public health, environmental protection and climate adaptation. Barbados negotiated a structure intended to use the cost of its debt to help finance an infrastructure problem. If the resulting plant delivers water of the required volume and quality, the deal will have an observable public purpose. If implementation falls short, the financial ingenuity will not remove the need for scrutiny. The promise is specific enough to be tested.[21]

VI. WHAT REMAINS WHEN THE SPEECHES END

"The BRIDGETOWN INITIATIVE *has a website, a reform design and allies in ministries across the world, but much of its momentum still depends on the woman who gives it a voice."*

Influence of this kind is personal, and personal influence is hard to bequeath. The Bridgetown Initiative has a website, a reform design and allies in ministries across the world, but much of its momentum still depends on the woman who gives it a voice. The question for Barbados, and for the Caribbean that so often borrows her platform, is whether the arguments can outlast the advocate.[5]

Barbados has given its diplomacy a programme with a name, a coalition and transactions that other governments can examine. Mottley has carried that programme from climate gatherings to meetings on development, technology and security, while her government has used its own borrowing arrangements to test part of the financial case. That combination gives her international profile substance beyond the recognisable voice at a podium.[6, 8, 21]

The palace meeting in Amman opened another route, with a future gathering planned in Barbados. The water transaction points towards a more immediate destination: a plant expected to produce water for farms and groundwater recharge. Between those two settings lies the ambition of Mottley's premiership — to turn the authority earned abroad into capacity at home. The completed financing, the work still ahead and the scrutiny of both belong in the same account.[9, 21]

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INTERLUDE · TRINIDAD

La Brea

The Pitch Lake, slow and black, folding light into itself on the south-western coast.

A STUDY IN BLACK AND GOLD. ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR PEARCEROBINSON.COM



A LANTERN ON THE HILLSIDE *on page 45*

Opening artwork for “HAITI: *The* DISTANCE BETWEEN *a* MANDATE *and a* STATE”.

ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR PEARCEROBINSON.COM

HAITI

The Distance Between a Mandate and a State

A stronger international security mandate has not yet delivered dependable protection, while displacement and deportations are stretching HAITI'S *capacity to survive. As elections retreat into 2027, the test of foreign engagement is whether* HAITIANS *can recover ordinary civilian life rather than merely endure another transition.*

By PEARCE ROBINSON · *Analysis*

THE GROUND REGAINED

The most revealing detail in the United Nations' latest account of Haiti is not a territorial advance but a return. Gang members driven from Bel Air and La Saline earlier in 2026 gradually re-established themselves and committed further abuses. Published on 12 November, the UN report describes a country in which an operation can remove an armed group without establishing the conditions that prevent its reappearance. For civilians, the distinction is fundamental: a neighbourhood is not secure because its previous occupiers have temporarily gone. It becomes secure when residents can reasonably expect protection tomorrow. [1]

Between July and September, at least 1,167 people were killed and 459 injured, according to the report. More than half of the documented killings and injuries occurred during ground or aerial operations by security forces against gangs, sometimes supported by a private military company using drones. This is not a finding that every casualty of those operations was unlawful, nor that all were civilians. It is evidence that the campaign itself carries a substantial human cost, requiring scrutiny alongside any assessment of territory recovered or armed opponents defeated. [1]

The report also records the vulnerability of places outside the capital's most familiar battle lines. Two attacks in Kenscoff during July and August killed at least 105 people, including 19 children; more than 36 victims were shot dead in a Protestant church courtyard. Attacks reached Saint-Michel-de-l'Attalaye in Artibonite and Marigot in the South-East, areas previously largely spared gang infiltration. The geographical lesson is uncomfortable. Pressure on armed groups in one location cannot be treated as a national improvement if violence subsequently consumes communities with fewer means of resistance. [1]

As of 14 November 2026, the international project remains suspended between a more ambitious security design and an incomplete deployment. The UN-authorised Gang Suppression Force has still not fully arrived. Meanwhile, people living under armed rule face targeted killing, extortion and punishment for resisting gang demands. The appropriate measure of engagement is therefore neither the severity of its mandate nor the confidence of its announcements. It is the durability of civilian protection after the operation ends, the patrol leaves and the international attention moves elsewhere. [1]

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BEYOND THE CAPITAL

The deterioration was already explicit in July 2025. Addressing the Security Council, senior UN officials described a sharp erosion of state authority and gang influence affecting every commune of metropolitan Port-au-Prince and extending beyond it. International commercial flights into the capital's airport remained suspended. Such descriptions should not be mistaken for a cadastral survey: influence, access and physical occupation are different forms of power. But the strategic picture was clear. Haiti's authorities and their foreign partners were confronting armed networks capable of obstructing the movement on which government and commerce depend. [2]

By September 2026, the International Organization for Migration was reporting nearly 1.5 million internally displaced people, with almost 80 per cent located outside Port-au-Prince. Artibonite recorded a 16 per cent increase between May and August. Once a place where families might seek refuge, parts of the department were themselves producing displacement. This is the essential correction to an exclusively metropolitan account of Haiti: the capital remains central, but the consequences of its insecurity are being absorbed across the country, in communities whose own services and resources were already limited. [3]

"Haiti's authorities and their foreign partners were confronting armed networks capable of obstructing the movement on which government and commerce depend."

The underlying assessment deserves attention as well as the headline. IOM's fourteenth displacement round collected information between 15 May and 12 August, using 518 enumerators and interviews with 4,642 key informants across 1,150 assessed localities. It identified an increase from approximately 1.47 million to 1.49 million displaced people between rounds. These are dated assessments, not a live population counter. Their value lies partly in revealing regional differences concealed by a relatively modest national increase, including the worsening conditions in Artibonite and continuing displacement within the capital. [4]

Nor does movement home necessarily establish recovery. The same assessment recorded 171,203 returnees, a three per cent increase, but described many returns as precarious. Some households returned despite persistent insecurity because economic conditions where they had sought shelter were so difficult. A family's departure from a displacement site may therefore signify exhausted alternatives rather than restored safety. International reporting that counts returns as an uncomplicated success risks rewarding the wrong outcome: the disappearance of people from an emergency register without the restoration of a viable place for them to live. [4]

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THE HOUSEHOLD FRONT

Food insecurity exposes the relationship between armed power and everyday survival. OCHA's April update, covering the March–June 2026 period, reported more than 5.83 million people experiencing acute food insecurity at IPC Phase 3 or above, including nearly 1.9 million in Emergency, Phase 4. The larger figure represented 52 per cent of the analysed population. These are period-specific estimates, not a verified November count, and Emergency is not synonymous with a formal famine classification. Even with those distinctions observed, the scale places hunger at the centre of any credible security analysis. [5]

OCHA identified persistent armed violence, economic contraction and inflation as forces disrupting livelihoods, restricting movement and eroding purchasing power. Agricultural production was insufficient to meet national food needs. The implications extend beyond the delivery of emergency rations. If insecurity prevents a household from earning money or a trader from moving goods, additional food supplies alone cannot restore its economic independence. Humanitarian assistance must keep people alive while security and economic measures reopen the activities through which they would ordinarily support themselves. Otherwise, relief becomes the recurring substitute for an inaccessible livelihood. [5]

There have nevertheless been measurable achievements. OCHA's February–March response report recorded 680 metric tonnes of food distributed by the World Food Programme and more than 523 tonnes of humanitarian cargo transported nationwide. It also reported continued education for over 12,000 children in 37 schools supported by the Hope Mission Foundation. These are concrete services delivered under dangerous conditions, not merely commitments entered into a communiqué. They complicate the easy assertion that international engagement has accomplished nothing, even as the wider emergency demonstrates that lifesaving delivery has not produced national stabilisation. [6]

The resources available have not matched the undertaking. In that April report, Haiti's humanitarian response plan was 19.5 per cent funded: US$172.1 million against a requirement of US$880.3 million. That is a dated funding snapshot, not a claim about the balance in November. Its significance is structural. A security initiative and an under-resourced civilian response cannot be evaluated separately when the population's ability to remain in a recovered neighbourhood depends on shelter, water, schools and treatment. Protection without those services may be too fragile to survive the next shock. [6]

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A DIFFERENT FORCE

On 30 September 2025, the Security Council authorised the transition from the Kenya-led Multinational Security Support mission to a Gang Suppression Force, initially for twelve months. Resolution 2793 passed with twelve votes in favour and three abstentions. The new ceiling was 5,550 personnel, comprising 5,500 uniformed military and police personnel and 50 civilians. Crucially, the force was authorised to conduct intelligence-led counter-gang operations either independently or alongside Haitian police and armed forces. Its remit went beyond the earlier mission's emphasis on operational support to the Haitian National Police. [7]

"Crucially, the force was authorised to conduct intelligence-led counter-gang operations either independently or alongside HAITIAN *police and armed forces."*

The institutional distinction matters. This was a Security Council-authorised multinational force, not simply a conventional UN peacekeeping operation under a new name. The Council also requested a UN Support Office in Haiti to provide logistical support, with the intention of assuming full logistical responsibility for the force within six months. Personnel costs would still depend on voluntary contributions. The arrangement sought to address practical weaknesses in the international response while preserving a division between UN support and the participating states' deployment of personnel. A stronger legal architecture did not automatically supply the people or equipment it envisaged. [7]

By the Security Council's October 2026 briefing, the force exceeded 2,000 personnel from six countries, according to its special representative, Jack Christofides: only a little over a third of authorised strength. Further contingents were expected, but equipment and other operational requirements remained consequential. The distinction between a ceiling and a deployment is the central accounting problem of this intervention. Authorised numbers describe what governments have permitted. They do not establish how many personnel are available for sustained operations, how they are equipped or whether they can maintain protection across several threatened areas simultaneously. [8]

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The change should therefore be understood as an attempted correction, not a demonstrated solution. The earlier mission did not prevent the erosion described by the UN in 2025; the replacement's greater powers had not secured a decisive national improvement by autumn 2026. Neither observation proves that external security assistance is unnecessary. Together they establish a more demanding standard for its defence. Supporters must show how deployments produce lasting civilian access and credible Haitian institutions, rather than asking an authorisation, a renamed force or a succession of tactical gains to stand in for those outcomes. [2, 7, 8]

THE COST OF CLEARING

A more offensive mandate also sharpens the obligation to distinguish legitimate force from abuse. The November UN account found that more than 16 per cent of victims of security-force operations were not associated with gangs. It documented 44 cases of extrajudicial execution or attempted extrajudicial execution involving Haitian National Police members, compared with 14 in the previous quarter. These are findings reported by the UN, not conclusions about every police unit or operation. They nevertheless make accountability an immediate operational concern rather than a reform to be postponed until after the emergency. [1]

Children complicate any account that divides the battlefield neatly between armed perpetrators and innocent bystanders. The report states that at least 32 boys aged 14 to 16, forcibly recruited by a gang, were killed during fighting with security forces in Gressier in August. It also documented 344 victims of sexual violence perpetrated by gang members, ranging in age from eight to 75. These figures describe different forms of victimisation, but both require a response capable of recognising coercion and vulnerability instead of treating suppression as an adequate description of protection. [1]

The case for civilian safeguards is practical as well as legal. A campaign that leaves residents afraid of both armed groups and the authorities weakens the trust on which durable policing depends. The UN's description of gangs returning to previously cleared neighbourhoods illustrates the danger of confusing an operation with a governing settlement. The analytical question is what follows the use of force: whether residents can seek protection, whether suspected offences are investigated, and whether public authority becomes a dependable service rather than an intermittent armed presence. [1]

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The same distinction applies to aggregate casualty figures. A decline in recorded deaths would be welcome, but would not by itself establish freedom from extortion or secure access to work. Conversely, a high number killed during an offensive cannot be presented as straightforward evidence of effectiveness when victims include people unaffiliated with gangs. The latest UN report demands a more discriminating assessment. International support should make the classification and investigation of harm more rigorous, not encourage a political environment in which any death associated with an operation is presumed justified. [1]

THE CALENDAR RECEDES

Haiti's political transition has also outlasted its original promise. In January 2026, CARICOM recalled that the Transitional Presidential Council's mandate would end on 7 February under its founding decree and the April 2024 political accord. The regional organisation expressed concern about turmoil inside the executive, including inconclusive efforts by some council members to dismiss the prime minister. Its warning was direct: fragmentation benefited the gangs while making an already difficult governance transition more complicated. The arrangements intended to prepare an elected government were themselves consuming political energy as their deadline approached. [9]

"In JANUARY 2026, CARICOM recalled that the TRANSITIONAL PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL'S mandate would end on 7 FEBRUARY under its founding decree and the APRIL 2024 political accord."

On 10 February, CARICOM acknowledged that the council had stepped down and that Prime Minister Didier Fils-Aimé and the Council of Ministers had assumed responsibility for governance. It expected a short interim period centred on security, election preparations and recovery. The distinction between an orderly transfer of administrative responsibility and democratic authorisation remains important. Continuity can prevent a vacuum, but it cannot on its own resolve the legitimacy problem that elections are supposed to address. The international preference for a functioning interlocutor must not become a substitute for the population's eventual choice. [10]

The latest announced electoral calendar puts that choice further away. On 29 October, AFP reported the Provisional Electoral Council's announcement of a first round of presidential and legislative elections on 18 July 2027, followed by a second round on 4 October and final results on 23 October. This replaced planned voting in December 2026 and February 2027. Haiti last held elections in 2016. The new dates are a schedule, not a guarantee, and should be described as such rather than as an accomplished return to constitutional government. [11]

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Security is a substantive electoral condition, not merely a convenient explanation for delay. AFP reported that several gang-controlled municipalities lacked registration centres and that gangs frequently closed roads. Under those circumstances, the right to participate can be unequal long before polling day. Yet postponement also carries a cost: unelected administration persists while citizens wait for protection sufficient to exercise their franchise. The challenge is to establish transparent minimum conditions for a credible vote and report progress against them, without converting the pursuit of perfect security into an indefinite veto on political renewal. [11]

THE CARIBBEAN OBLIGATION

CARICOM's role has been to keep a political channel open while insisting that the process remain Haitian-led and Haitian-owned. Its February statement called for structured inclusion of citizens' views through consultation with representatives and civil society. This is a necessary principle, but not a self-executing one. Ownership cannot be inferred merely because the people signing an agreement are Haitian. For the regional organisation, the harder task is to help ensure that consultation reaches beyond the immediate competition among executive office-holders and political organisations to people whose insecurity makes participation difficult. [10]

The regional machinery has remained engaged. CARICOM's Eminent Persons Group, comprising former prime ministers Kenny Anthony, Bruce Golding and Perry Christie, participated in an OAS consultative meeting in Washington on 2 February 2026. The discussions covered security, governance, elections and the forthcoming end of the presidential council's mandate, alongside engagement with international partners. That meeting still referred to national elections in August 2026. Read against the subsequent timetable, its agenda captures both the persistence of mediation and the distance between diplomatic planning assumptions and Haiti's capacity to fulfil them. [12]

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Migration exposes another dimension of regional responsibility. Reporting on 5 September, The Haitian Times cited the Haitian Support Group for Repatriates and Refugees, GARR, as recording 194,465 forced returns from the Dominican Republic during the first eight months of 2026, compared with 1,187 from the United States. It also reported 1,426 combined returns from the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos Islands and Jamaica. These are attributed figures for a defined period, not a complete November total. Their scale nevertheless shows why discussion of Haiti's international relationships cannot end with security deployments and mediation. [13]

GARR warned that border reception and reintegration capacity were inadequate. IOM separately described border departments carrying the simultaneous burden of internal displacement and arrivals from neighbouring countries. For Caribbean governments, the resulting contradiction deserves more than rhetorical concern: stabilisation seeks to reduce pressure on fragile communities while removals can increase it. This does not eliminate states' authority over immigration. It does mean that regional policy should consider protection needs, reception capacity and the foreseeable consequences of return as part of the same crisis response, rather than assigning them to an unrelated border-enforcement file. [3, 13]

"IOM separately described border departments carrying the simultaneous burden of internal displacement and arrivals from neighbouring countries."

WHAT ENGAGEMENT OWES

The United States presents the sharpest version of that policy tension. In September, Human Rights Watch reported that deportation flights to Cap-Haïtien had risen from roughly monthly to weekly. Citing Haiti's National Office for Migration, it said more than 450 people had been deported from the United States since July. Researchers interviewed 44 deportees arriving on two August flights and observed reception at the airport. Haitian officials described insufficient funding, personnel and policy arrangements to receive and assist them safely. This was an investigation of specific arrivals, not a census of every returnee. [14]

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The organisation reported that initial assistance included registration, a meal, a drink and at least 10,000 gourdes, approximately US$77, but that sustained shelter, transport, health care and reintegration support were generally unavailable beyond limited urgent assistance. Some interviewees said they had pending asylum claims. Those accounts require attribution rather than an assumption about every deportation's legality. They nonetheless expose the weakness of treating arrival at a functioning airport as evidence that return is safe. The relevant journey continues through a country where accommodation, relatives and a viable livelihood may lie beyond dangerous roads. [14]

International engagement has achieved things that matter: humanitarian supplies have moved, children have continued learning, a regional political dialogue has persisted, and a more substantial security framework has been authorised. It has not yet converted those efforts into dependable national protection or an elected government. The distinction should discipline both its defenders and its critics. Declaring total failure erases services that sustain people; announcing progress without acknowledging recurring displacement and violence turns institutional activity into its own justification. Neither is an adequate account of what Haitians have received for the promises made in their name. [1, 6, 7, 10, 11]

"The latest evidence shows the cost of separating security from civilian institutions, or diplomatic calendars from conditions on the ground."

The next phase should be judged by whether recovered neighbourhoods remain habitable, displaced households can make genuinely voluntary decisions, and electoral participation becomes practically possible. Those are conclusions drawn from the record, not claims that any single intervention can guarantee them. The latest evidence shows the cost of separating security from civilian institutions, or diplomatic calendars from conditions on the ground. Haiti does not lack another description of its emergency. What international engagement owes is a demonstrable narrowing of the distance between an authorised response and the ordinary public protection that a state is meant to provide. [1, 4, 11]

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THE BOARD AND ITS PIECES *on page 56*

Opening artwork for “SMALL STATES, EXPENSIVE CHOICES”.

ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR PEARCEROBINSON.COM

SMALL STATES, EXPENSIVE CHOICES

Competition for the CARIBBEAN *is moving from diplomatic declarations into hospital contracts, port software and border databases.* GOVERNMENTS *seeking room between* WASHINGTON, BEIJING *and newer financiers face a harder task than choosing sides: making powerful partners compete on* CARIBBEAN *terms.*

By PEARCE ROBINSON · *Analysis*

THE PRICE OF A HOSPITAL

The argument over influence in the Caribbean can be measured in beds. In July 2025, Bahamian health minister Michael Darville defended Chinese financing for a second public hospital on New Providence by describing the alternatives his government said it had explored. American government-backed finance had shown little appetite, he told The Tribune; a British proposal arrived when negotiations with China were almost complete. The attraction, in his account, was a 2 per cent interest rate and a five-year repayment grace period. Washington might see strategic encroachment. Nassau had a hospital to finance. [1]

The British account complicated that explanation without making it disappear. According to the same report, the UK High Commission said its offer was designed to match or improve upon Chinese terms for cost, construction and repayment. Darville argued that changing financing partners would require substantial additional work and delay delivery. These were competing descriptions of an actual procurement decision, not proof that one country had purchased another's allegiance. They exposed a practical advantage in development diplomacy: a financier already embedded in a project can become difficult to replace, even when a rival eventually offers competition. [1]

By February 2026, the disagreement had become more explicit. The Tribune reported that US ambassador Herschel Walker urged reconsideration of the US$195 million Chinese financing, challenging the application of Chinese law and jurisdiction to the loan. He pledged American help in securing a better arrangement. That was an offer to help find alternatives, rather than evidence that replacement financing had closed. The distinction matters to any government being asked to interrupt a project: a warning arrives immediately; a substitute hospital does not. [2]

The Bahamian dispute supplies a useful starting point for understanding the wider contest. Caribbean governments need infrastructure that their publics can use, while powerful partners increasingly judge that infrastructure by the access or influence it might confer. Neither perspective cancels the other. Cheap credit deserves scrutiny, including its governing law and long-term obligations. Security objections deserve scrutiny too, particularly when their practical effect would be to delay an essential service. The region's negotiating problem is to insist that both kinds of claim become specific, comparable and answerable to the people paying the bill.

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THE HARBOUR BENEATH THE MAP

In Jamaica, the contest has moved towards the operating systems of trade. On 7 July 2026, The Gleaner reported a United States-backed security assessment involving Kingston Wharves, Kingston Freeport and Montego Bay Freeport. AECOM had been engaged to examine physical security, cargo systems, maritime operations, information technology and workforce management. The newspaper described an exercise intended to produce recommendations aligned with American and international security standards. Here, strategic competition was entering through an assessment of how ports actually function, rather than through a demand for a new diplomatic alignment. [3]

Beijing's response was revealingly precise. The Chinese embassy said that China Merchants Port Holdings and the CMA CGM group were shareholders in Kingston Freeport Terminal, but that the terminal was managed by the French group and China Merchants did not participate in operations. It warned against undermining Chinese companies' lawful interests. The Gleaner also corrected an earlier version of its report which had wrongly described the Chinese interest as a majority holding. That correction is fundamental: investment, ownership and operational control are different things, with different implications for both security and contractual rights. [3]

A June 2025 study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies identified 37 port projects associated with Chinese companies across Latin America and the Caribbean. Its concern extended beyond possible naval facilities to intelligence collection, logistics information and the capacity to obstruct access during a crisis. Those are the report's assessments of potential vulnerability, not findings that every Chinese-linked terminal has been used for such purposes. Indeed, it judged an overt Chinese naval facility close to the continental United States unlikely in the near term because of the probable American reaction. [4]

For Caribbean authorities, the sensible response is neither blanket reassurance nor a presumption that every Chinese commercial presence is military infrastructure in disguise. A security review should identify who can access sensitive information, who controls critical equipment and what happens if an operator fails or a relationship deteriorates. The Jamaican case also shows why an assessment must distinguish a shareholder from a manager. Otherwise, a legitimate investigation of vulnerabilities risks becoming a contest of national labels. The relevant unit of sovereignty is the enforceable contract, supported by the technical capacity to understand what it permits.

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THE NETWORK IS THE ASSET

Ports and telecommunications increasingly belong in the same strategic discussion because a terminal is also an information system. The scope of Jamaica's reported assessment explicitly included IT networks and cargo systems, not simply fences and waterside access. That makes the question of influence less visible than a flag over a building. A foreign company's importance may lie in what it maintains, what information its systems process and how readily those systems can be replaced. The public argument about ownership can therefore miss the more consequential question of dependence on particular technologies. [3]

American pressure over digital infrastructure has a longer history than the present administration. In October 2020, the Jamaica Observer reported then US ambassador Donald Tapia warning Jamaica against Chinese-sourced fifth-generation mobile technology and arguing that the financial sector could be affected. He presented Washington's objections in national-security terms, specifically naming Huawei and ZTE. This is a documented example of American diplomatic pressure over prospective 5G choices; it should not be mistaken for evidence that Jamaica subsequently installed a particular national network, or that any specific Jamaican system was compromised. [5]

"Caribbean governments, in turn, should insist on independent testing and meaningful access controls rather than accepting diplomatic assurances from either side."

The danger in such disputes is that governments are presented with a security instruction rather than a fully costed alternative. Replacing a supplier can entail more than purchasing different hardware. A prudent procurement process would price maintenance, staff training, software support and eventual migration before making a commitment. Those considerations do not establish that the cheapest supplier is safest, or that a favoured Western supplier is necessarily affordable. They establish the need to compare whole systems over time, rather than treating the purchase price or the supplier's nationality as a sufficient answer.

The same discipline should govern any demand to remove technology already in service. If a partner identifies a serious vulnerability, it should explain the risk as specifically as disclosure permits and help develop a workable remedy. Caribbean governments, in turn, should insist on independent testing and meaningful access controls rather than accepting diplomatic assurances from either side. The principle is straightforward even when implementation is difficult: national security should produce greater domestic understanding of essential networks. It should not merely transfer confidence, and dependency, from one foreign capital to another.

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MEMORANDA AND THEIR LIMITS

The Belt and Road Initiative is often treated as a single strategic embrace, although the documents associated with it can describe quite different undertakings. Barbados's February 2019 memorandum was presented as a framework for cooperation on transformational infrastructure, including transport. Contemporary reporting noted similar memoranda involving Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Suriname. Such documents establish political direction and opportunities for cooperation. Their existence alone does not disclose the interest rate on a subsequent loan, prove that a project is commercially viable or establish what rights a contractor will exercise after construction. [6]

A more recent Guyanese agreement illustrates the need to read beyond the label. According to China's embassy, on 10 October 2025 the two governments signed a memorandum for green and low-carbon transport cooperation. The announcement envisaged exchanges, capacity-building and Chinese donations of electric vehicles and charging facilities, connecting the undertaking to Belt and Road climate cooperation. This was an announced programme of assistance, not a disclosed infrastructure loan. Treating every Chinese-backed initiative as debt would obscure the financial mechanism and the different obligations that need examining. [7]

The political value of such cooperation is nevertheless real. A donation can establish familiarity with a technology, demonstrate responsiveness and give a relationship a practical constituency. That does not make the recipient a client state. It means that influence can emerge through ordinary administrative experience: officials learning which partner answers requests, which equipment functions and which commitments survive the ceremony. The appropriate test is delivery and subsequent dependence, not an assumption that a memorandum either transforms the strategic balance overnight or means nothing because it is not itself a binding construction contract.

The Bahamian hospital offers the complementary warning. A project can be defended as a financial transaction while becoming the subject of an international political dispute. The country receiving an offer does not have exclusive control over how other governments interpret it. [1, 2] A credible strategy therefore requires more than repeating that development is apolitical. It requires preparing for predictable objections before signature, examining contractual exposure and preserving options where possible. Publishing the relevant terms would strengthen that position: sovereignty is easier to defend when citizens can see what has actually been agreed.

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RECOGNITION HAS A CONSTITUENCY

Taiwan introduces a different kind of choice because formal diplomatic recognition cannot be diversified in the manner of a portfolio of construction contracts. An August 2026 CSIS commentary identified Belize, Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as the five Caribbean countries maintaining diplomatic relations with Taipei. The authors framed support for these partners as an opportunity to counter Beijing's influence. That is an explicitly strategic argument from a Washington think tank, rather than a neutral description of what Caribbean governments should consider their primary interests. [8]

The same commentary described a less theatrical contest conducted through development work. It highlighted Taiwan's involvement in the Basseterre desalination plant in Saint Kitts and Nevis, including training local personnel, alongside agricultural and other technical cooperation. Its broader assessment was that development assistance works best when connected to larger programmes and maintained after delivery. That is also the strongest Caribbean argument for taking these relationships seriously on their own terms. Recognition may have geopolitical value overseas, but its domestic durability is more likely to depend on whether cooperation addresses an identifiable need. [8]

"That is an explicitly strategic argument from a WASHINGTON *think tank, rather than a neutral description of what* CARIBBEAN *governments should consider their primary interests."*

Saint Lucia's government portal supplied a recent picture of the relationship's diplomatic life. An account published on 15 October 2026, attributed to Taiwan's embassy, described a National Day reception held on 9 October. Ambassador Nicole Su linked the partnership to democracy, freedom and human rights and thanked Saint Lucia for its international support. The account should be read as the embassy's presentation of the relationship. It nevertheless documents the continuing public work of recognition: explaining shared purposes, cultivating officials and translating a distant diplomatic contest into a relationship with a local audience. [9]

Embassies matter in this competition because influence requires continuity as well as money. A resident mission can sustain contact between major visits and give smaller programmes a political identity. The Saint Lucian reception and the Chinese embassy's detailed intervention over Jamaica's ports show different versions of that work. [9, 3] Caribbean governments should extract practical value from diplomatic attention without confusing access with accountability. An attentive ambassador represents a foreign government. Domestic institutions must remain capable of determining whether a celebrated friendship is delivering benefits, and whether those benefits justify any commitments made in return.

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SECURITY ENTERS THE DATABASE

Washington's influence is also being built through systems that do not resemble conventional infrastructure. CARICOM's Implementation Agency for Crime and Security announced that it and the US Department of Homeland Security signed a memorandum on 10 July 2026 covering biometric identity verification, information-sharing and collaborative risk assessment. The ceremony took place at the Saint Kitts and Nevis embassy in Washington. According to IMPACS, the framework provides for exchanging biometric and associated biographical information to assist border security, law enforcement and criminal investigations across CARICOM member states and associate members. [10]

IMPACS specifically connected the arrangement to citizenship-by-investment programmes in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia. It said improved background checks and identity-fraud detection would help respond to increased international scrutiny before citizenship was granted. The agency presented the agreement as a means of protecting regional security and strengthening the integrity of economic migration. Its account is important because Caribbean participation should not automatically be described as submission: regional authorities identified purposes of their own, even where those purposes converged with American priorities. [10]

Yet the agreement also makes clear why digital sovereignty cannot be reduced to a debate about Chinese suppliers. Sharing identity information with the United States raises a different set of questions from purchasing telecommunications equipment, but it still concerns the terms on which sensitive systems connect across borders. The public IMPACS announcement describes the intended benefits; it does not reproduce a complete public rulebook governing every subsequent use. That is a reason to seek more detail, rather than evidence that misuse has occurred. Effective security cooperation and careful scrutiny are compatible. [10]

A Caribbean standard should ask who authorises access, how mistakes are corrected and what limits apply to retention or onward sharing. These are questions to put to any partner. Applied consistently, they would improve the region's position in negotiations with Washington as well as Beijing. Selective scrutiny would do the opposite: treating one country's technology as inherently suspect while accepting another's data arrangements without examination would substitute alignment for governance. The aim should be institutions strong enough to cooperate confidently, with domestic law and public oversight keeping pace with the systems being connected.

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OTHER DOORS

The choice of financiers extends beyond the two largest protagonists. In September 2024, the Saudi Fund for Development and Saint Lucia signed contracts with Saint Lucian and Saudi firms for the reconstruction of St Jude Hospital. The fund described a US$75 million concessional loan supporting a facility designed to include 100 beds, maternity wards, emergency rooms and surgical suites. This was an earlier financing commitment, not a new 2026 announcement or proof of completion. It remains instructive because a Caribbean state recognising Taiwan could pursue a major health project with a Gulf development partner. [11]

The following day, the Saudi fund signed its first development loan agreement with Dominica: US$41 million for infrastructure rehabilitation in Roseau. Its announcement identified seven principal streets and objectives including better connectivity, safety and access to services. Here again, the documented instrument was a loan, not a grant or an equity investment. The project widened Dominica's financing relationships, but that fact alone cannot establish that its overall exposure became safer. Diversification is valuable when it improves terms or resilience; accumulating obligations to a larger number of creditors is not automatically strategic independence. [12]

"Diversification is valuable when it improves terms or resilience; accumulating obligations to a larger number of creditors is not automatically strategic independence."

An October 2025 initiative addressed a different constraint. The OPEC Fund and Inter-American Development Bank announced a US$3 million project-preparation facility intended to help unlock more than US$400 million in infrastructure investment across Latin America and the Caribbean. Administered by the IDB, it would support work including feasibility studies, environmental and social safeguards, and procurement planning in 24 eligible countries. The larger figure was an ambition for investment mobilisation, not money already disbursed to Caribbean governments. The OPEC Fund arrangement was also a multilateral partnership, not simply a bilateral Gulf offer. [13]

Preparation may be less politically rewarding than a groundbreaking ceremony, but it can improve a small government's bargaining position before a financier becomes indispensable. A credible design, independently assessed costs and a sound procurement process make competing proposals easier to compare. That is the strategic promise of a broader partner landscape: more possibilities for assembling a project on domestic terms. It is not a guarantee that Saudi, American, Chinese or multilateral money will arrive without conditions. Each instrument needs to be read separately, including its repayment obligations, procurement requirements and exposure to delay.

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THE POWER TO COMPARE

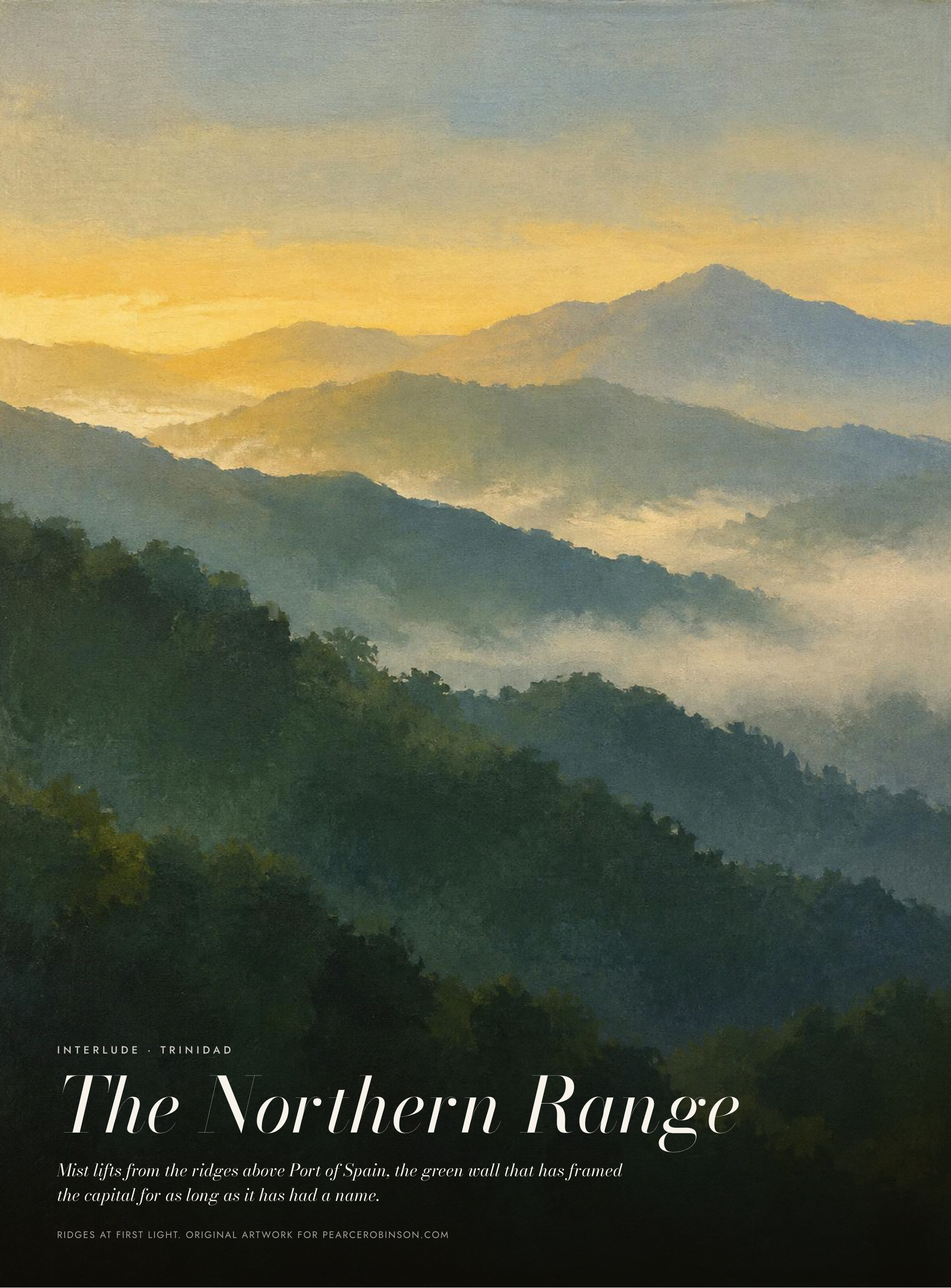
Taken together, the record of 2025 and 2026 resists a simple map of Caribbean governments divided into rival camps. The Bahamas defended Chinese hospital financing while considering and disputing Western alternatives. Jamaica's port assessment brought American security interests into contact with a terminal whose ownership and management required careful differentiation. CARICOM IMPACS pursued deeper information-sharing with Washington, while Chinese cooperation with Guyana extended into low-carbon transport. These arrangements concern different sectors and confer different kinds of influence. Counting agreements by national flag would reveal less than examining what each government can enforce. [1, 3, 7, 10]

The most useful regional response would be to improve the ability to compare offers before negotiation narrows the field. Governments could publish consistent information on borrowing costs, governing law and repayment schedules, while ensuring that commercially sensitive exceptions do not swallow public disclosure. Technical review should examine operating costs and vulnerability to interruption alongside construction prices. For digital systems, that review should include independent scrutiny of access and replacement options. These are proposed standards, not a claim that the region already applies a common regime. Their value would lie in making international competition more legible at home.

Partners should face a corresponding test. A government warning against a Chinese project should explain whether it objects to a specific contractual term, a demonstrable security vulnerability or simply the expansion of Chinese influence. If it proposes an alternative, the timetable and financing should be credible enough to compare. Beijing should face equally exacting questions about its claims of mutual benefit: the identity of the lender, the obligations of the borrower and the rights of the operator are more informative than declarations of friendship. Gulf and multilateral partners warrant the same discipline, without exemption for being newer or less politically contentious.

Small states cannot abolish the unequal distribution of power around them. They can, however, resist allowing foreign capitals to define every decision in advance. The hospital controversy shows why an affordable, timely offer matters; the Jamaican port dispute shows why the details of control matter just as much. [1, 3] A durable Caribbean strategy would hold those insights together. It would welcome competition for useful projects while refusing to treat urgency as a reason to conceal obligations. The prize is neither perfect neutrality nor the largest collection of partners, but greater freedom to choose the next project without being trapped by the last.

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INTERLUDE · TRINIDAD

The Northern Range

Mist lifts from the ridges above Port of Spain, the green wall that has framed the capital for as long as it has had a name.

RIDGES AT FIRST LIGHT. ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR PEARCEROBINSON.COM

WASHINGTON, REFLECTED *on page 66*

Opening artwork for "A CHECK *on* WASHINGTON: *Not a* CARIBBEAN REPRIEVE".

ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR PEARCEROBINSON.COM

A CHECK ON WASHINGTON

Not a Caribbean Reprieve

Democrats have won both chambers of CONGRESS, *although some election results remain unresolved. For the* CARIBBEAN, *the opening is real—but tariffs, deportations and coercive foreign policy will not disappear with a change of congressional leadership.*

By PEARCE ROBINSON · *Analysis*

THE VERDICT AND THE REMAINDER

The central result of the United States elections of 3 November 2026 is no longer in doubt: Democrats have won control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The remaining uncertainty concerns the size of their majorities, not which party will organise Congress. Reuters reported the capture of both chambers after an electoral wave that reached into Republican strongholds. For Caribbean governments, that distinction matters immediately. Washington will acquire a stronger institutional counterweight to President Donald Trump, but the presidency itself has not changed hands. The election is a redistribution of American power, not its wholesale transfer. [1]

The numerical record requires more care than the language of a landslide suggests. The Reuters results graphic opened for this article displayed 254 Democratic House seats and 167 Republican seats, leaving 14 of the chamber's 435 seats outside those displayed totals. Its Senate graphic still showed 54–44. Those figures are a source snapshot, not a certified final count or a claim that every outstanding contest remained uncalled on 14 November. The House majority is verified; an exact, fully updated final division is not established by that graphic. [2]

A later, independently reported Senate result resolves part of that discrepancy. On 11 November, NPR reported the Associated Press call for Democrat Scott Colom over Republican incumbent Cindy Hyde-Smith in Mississippi, expanding the incoming Democratic majority to 55 seats. Alaska remained undecided in that report. Taken together with the earlier Republican tally, the verified position is therefore a Democratic-aligned majority of at least 55, with 44 Republican seats accounted for and Alaska unresolved in the latest Senate race-call report verified here. No Alaska winner is declared in this article. [1, 3]

The scale of the change is visible without speculative arithmetic. Reuters reported Democratic Senate victories in Texas and Kansas, and Abdul El-Sayed's defeat of Mike Rogers in Michigan. Mississippi subsequently supplied another Republican-held seat. These are consequential results, but a seat won is not a policy enacted. By 14 November, Reuters was already reporting disagreements among Democrats about their economic programme and how confrontational to be towards Trump. Caribbean capitals should read the outcome as an opportunity to make specific demands, rather than assume that an American opposition victory constitutes a regional programme. [1, 3, 4]

THE INTERVAL BEFORE POWER

There is also a consequential interval between winning Congress and exercising its powers. Reuters reported that the new Democratic majorities would be seated in January, while Republicans retained control during the intervening lame-duck period. Funding the federal government beyond December was among the business still ahead. For governments negotiating with Washington, the practical implication is that an incoming committee chair and a serving administration occupy different positions. A promise of future scrutiny does not suspend a present restriction, release an aid payment or prevent an outgoing majority from trying to settle unfinished business. [1]

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Once seated, Democrats will have substantial instruments. They can investigate the administration, demand concessions over major legislation and use the Senate's confirmation role to scrutinise or block nominees. Reuters identified investigations, confirmation hearings and funding authority as their principal foreign-policy tools. Yet the same reporting emphasised the president's continuing latitude abroad. The Caribbean should expect more contested decision-making, not a neat replacement of executive orders with congressional instructions. The outcome changes who can question an American policy, how publicly it must be defended and what political price its continuation might carry. [1, 5]

Trump has already pointed to his veto. That reminder is more than post-election defiance: control of both chambers does not by itself guarantee that legislation opposed by the president becomes law. The January Venezuela war-powers debate demonstrated the additional difficulty of assembling the two-thirds support needed in both chambers to overcome an expected veto. Caribbean diplomacy should consequently distinguish measures that committees can initiate themselves from statutory changes requiring presidential agreement or a much broader congressional coalition. A hearing may be achievable where repeal is not; both can matter, but they are different products. [1, 14]

The most useful regional response would be to turn general concern into a small number of administratively precise requests. Which restriction should change? Which agency controls it? Is the obstacle a statute, an executive decision or the terms of a particular licence? This is an analytical prescription, not a forecast of Democratic generosity. Reuters' post-election reporting describes a party divided over its governing approach and an executive still equipped to act internationally. Caribbean governments will be better placed if they offer legislators concrete decisions to examine rather than an undifferentiated appeal to reverse the Trump years. [4, 5]

THE TARIFF AFTERLIFE

Trade offers the clearest warning against reading electoral change as immediate relief. On 20 February, the Supreme Court rejected Trump's use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to impose sweeping tariffs. Reuters reported a 6–3 judgment holding that the statute did not confer the tariff power the president claimed. The constitutional significance was considerable: Congress possesses the authority to impose taxes and tariffs, even though it can delegate powers through legislation. But judicial rejection of one route did not end the administration's pursuit of import duties. The legal instrument and the political objective proved separable. [6]

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Trump responded by ordering a temporary 10 per cent global duty under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974 and initiating investigations under other authorities. Reuters reported that Section 122 permitted duties for up to 150 days, after which congressional approval would be needed for an extension. That February measure must not be presented as an indefinitely continuing November tariff. Its relevance here is the demonstrated capacity to substitute authorities, alongside the limits attached to each. A regional exporter needs the current product-specific treatment, not an old headline converted into a permanent rate. [7]

For the Caribbean, the incoming Congress therefore represents a possible source of greater trade predictability rather than an automatic return to earlier conditions. Legislators can ask how tariff authorities are being used and examine whether temporary measures are becoming a revolving mechanism of uncertainty. The practical regional demand should be a transparent account of applicable duties, exemptions and review procedures. That would be less dramatic than a sweeping declaration of friendship, but potentially more useful to a producer deciding whether an American order remains commercially viable. This is the policy opening suggested by the institutional record, not an announced settlement. [6, 7]

The election also complicates any assumption that Democrats will spend their mandate chiefly on foreign suppliers. Reuters reported that high living costs and the Iran war were central to the Republican defeat, while the Democratic gathering in Denver revealed competing approaches to affordability. Caribbean arguments should therefore connect dependable trade with the interests American legislators say they were elected to defend. Predictable rules can be presented as an alternative to repeated disruption. The case will still need to be won: the verified post-election record contains no comprehensive Caribbean tariff bargain and no basis for promising that one is imminent. [1, 4]

"The case will still need to be won: the verified post-election record contains no comprehensive CARIBBEAN *tariff bargain and no basis for promising that one is imminent."*

PASSPORTS UNDER SUSPICION

Travel restrictions illustrate why regional analysis must move beyond an exclusively Cuban or Haitian frame. The proclamation signed on 16 December 2025, effective from 1 January 2026, continued full restrictions affecting Haiti and maintained partial restrictions concerning Cuba and Venezuela. It also imposed partial restrictions on Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica. The instrument differentiates between immigrant and non-immigrant entry and contains exceptions. These are not interchangeable categories, and a blanket assertion that every citizen of every listed Caribbean country is prohibited from entering the United States would misstate the policy. [8]

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The proclamation's scope provisions are equally important. Its restrictions generally concern designated nationals outside the United States on the applicable effective date who did not possess a valid visa on that date. It exempts lawful permanent residents and, under specified conditions, dual nationals travelling on a passport from a country not designated. Other exceptions and discretionary national-interest provisions also appear in the text. Families and businesses need those distinctions preserved. Reporting that collapses a nationality restriction, a visa decision and an individual's admissibility into a single absolute ban creates unnecessary confusion about already difficult choices. [8]

Congressional change creates an avenue for questioning the rationale and operation of these measures, but the proclamation itself is an executive instrument. The credible expectation is more scrutiny of implementation and more pressure for explanations, rather than the automatic reopening of every affected route in January. A useful regional submission would identify the exact category involved and request an answer capable of being communicated consistently to applicants. The question is not merely whether Washington sounds more welcoming after the midterms; it is whether a person can establish which rule governs a proposed journey before committing money or making irreversible arrangements. [5, 8]

Migration inside the United States follows another legal track. On 25 June, the Supreme Court cleared the way for the administration to terminate Temporary Protected Status protections affecting more than 350,000 Haitians, Reuters reported. The ruling overturned lower-court decisions that had halted the terminations. It would therefore be wrong to describe the earlier judicial blocks as the latest verified legal position. Equally, the ruling is not evidence that every affected person has been deported. Loss of protection, exposure to removal and an executed deportation are distinct events; this article does not supply an unverified deportation total. [9]

THE HOUSEHOLD FRONTIER

Remittances bring the policy argument into the household budget. The Internal Revenue Service states that, from 1 January 2026, a one per cent tax applies to remittances sent from the United States to recipients abroad when the sender funds the transfer with cash, a money order, a cashier's cheque or a similar physical instrument. The sender is liable, and providers must collect and remit the tax. The agency's April announcement accompanied proposed regulations clarifying its application. The tax was already in force; the regulatory proposals should not be confused with a proposal to begin taxing transfers at some future date. [10]

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Its scope also demands precision. The IRS describes a tax on transfers funded through specified instruments, not a universal levy on every movement of money from America to the Caribbean. On a hypothetical transfer of $500 falling within the rule, one per cent amounts to $5, before other charges. That is an illustration of the stated rate, not an estimate of average household transfers or total Caribbean losses. The distributional concern is straightforward: where a sender cannot readily change the funding method, an additional charge must either increase the sender's outlay or reduce what can be sent. [10]

An incoming Congress offers a venue for challenging that burden, but the election itself does not repeal the tax. The useful distinction is between seeking changes to legislation and asking the administration to explain implementation. Regional governments and diaspora organisations could press for clear consumer information and document how the rule operates for people using the covered instruments. Such an effort would be stronger than repeating earlier, larger rates that are not the operative one in the IRS account. The verified rate is one per cent; a campaign against it should begin with the law actually described by the collecting authority. [10]

Migration and remittances should nevertheless be considered together as an analytical matter. A person facing uncertain permission to remain and work cannot make the same household plans as someone with secure status; a transfer charge then operates within that wider uncertainty. That does not establish a quantified regional economic shock, and none is claimed here. It does explain why Caribbean engagement with the new Congress should connect legal protection and the mechanics of family support without merging them into one legal issue. The Supreme Court's TPS ruling and the IRS tax guidance concern different powers acting upon overlapping human relationships. [9, 10]

"It does explain why CARIBBEAN *engagement with the new* CONGRESS *should connect legal protection and the mechanics of family support without merging them into one legal issue."*

AID AFTER THE AGENCY

Foreign assistance presents a harder problem than restarting a paused cheque. On 1 July 2025, Reuters reported Secretary of State Marco Rubio's announcement that USAID would cease implementing foreign aid, with the remaining operation transferred to the State Department. The report described billions of dollars frozen and cut, widespread staff and contractor dismissals, and serious disruption to humanitarian work. Rubio presented the new approach as more targeted and limited, prioritising trade and investment. Those are the verified institutional changes. They do not justify the broader claim that every American aid programme everywhere ceased to exist. [11]

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For the Caribbean, the distinction between an appropriation and a functioning delivery system becomes central. More money, if Congress were to provide it, would not by itself answer who administers a programme or which organisation can deliver it. That is an inference from the dismantling described by Reuters, not a claim that a particular Caribbean project has suffered a loss that has not been documented here. A serious regional request should specify the activity to be supported, the institution able to carry it out and the public-interest result expected. Nostalgia for an agency's name cannot substitute for those decisions. [11]

Democratic control makes investigation of the aid restructuring more plausible and creates opportunities to contest future funding choices. It does not establish that USAID will be rebuilt in its previous form. Reuters' foreign-policy assessment identifies congressional funding authority as an important but limited counterweight to the president. Caribbean leaders should therefore pursue enforceable programme commitments rather than treat the incoming majority as an institutional restoration guarantee. The difficult bargaining will concern what survives, under whose authority and with what accountability. Those questions remain material even if legislators and the administration reach agreement on a headline assistance figure. [5, 11]

There is a wider negotiating danger in accepting the suggestion that trade can simply replace assistance. Rubio's stated preference for trade over aid is a policy choice; it is not proof that the two perform identical functions. The regional argument should distinguish commercial investment from activities whose purpose is humanitarian protection or public capacity. That need not require rejecting private enterprise. It requires asking whether the proposed financing mechanism can perform the specified task. In the aftermath of the midterms, a disciplined account of function and delivery would give sympathetic legislators something more durable to defend than a general demand for generosity. [11]

TWO SANCTIONS STORIES

Cuba and Venezuela should not be folded into a single account of undifferentiated American pressure. On 7 May, Washington imposed financial sanctions on Cuba's military-run conglomerate GAESA and the Cuban-Canadian Moa Nickel joint venture, Reuters reported. The same report described the restriction of most oil shipments to Cuba and worsening blackouts. These are dated measures and reported effects, not a complete inventory of every restriction operating in November. They nevertheless establish why Caribbean governments cannot assess sanctions solely as diplomatic signals: the record involves energy supplies, investment and the practical conditions in which neighbouring populations live. [12]

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Venezuela's trajectory included selective relaxation. On 29 January, Reuters reported a broad American licence permitting US companies to buy, sell, transport, store and refine Venezuelan crude, while leaving production sanctions in place. The report followed the US operation that captured Nicolás Maduro on 3 January. That January licence should not be represented as an exhaustive statement of every subsequent authorisation. Its significance is the demonstrated selectivity of the policy: restrictions can be eased for specified transactions while other constraints remain. A change in congressional control cannot be translated mechanically into either universal tightening or comprehensive normalisation. [13]

The regional diplomatic task is to identify how particular restrictions affect lawful activity and where clarification or relief is needed. Congress can expose the reasoning behind policy, question officials and shape legislation, while executive agencies retain important operational responsibilities. A Caribbean proposal that specifies a transaction and the decision required would be more actionable than a broad appeal to choose between pressure and engagement. The sanctions record itself shows why: Cuba's May designations and Venezuela's January oil authorisation moved through different instruments towards different immediate objectives, despite belonging to the same administration's regional strategy. [5, 12, 13]

There is already a regional basis for insisting on dialogue rather than treating every concern as disloyalty. When Rubio met Caribbean leaders in Saint Kitts and Nevis in February, Reuters reported discussions about gangs and migration alongside anxiety over the squeeze on Cuba. Jamaica's prime minister called for dialogue between Havana and Washington. That meeting demonstrated that security cooperation and disagreement over coercive policy can coexist. The new Congress provides another audience for that position, not a reason to abandon executive diplomacy. Caribbean governments will still need to communicate with the administration that controls the machinery they want changed. [16]

> "*When* RUBIO *met* CARIBBEAN *leaders in* SAINT KITTS *and* NEVIS *in* FEBRUARY, REUTERS *reported discussions about gangs and migration alongside anxiety over the squeeze on* CUBA."

WHO AUTHORISES THE DANGER?

War powers are the sharpest test of the distinction between winning votes and restraining action. On 8 January, five Republican senators joined Democrats to advance a resolution that would have barred further military action against Venezuela without congressional authorisation. The procedural vote was 52–47. Reuters explicitly described the obstacles remaining, including passage through both chambers and an expected presidential veto. The measure's advance was therefore evidence of congressional resistance, not an enacted prohibition. For the Caribbean, where the consequences of confrontation would not respect congressional procedure, that difference is fundamental. [14]

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Six days later, the effort was blocked. Reuters reported a 51–50 vote to dismiss the resolution, with Vice-President JD Vance breaking the tie after two Republicans changed position. The administration argued that Maduro's capture was a judicial operation rather than a military one; supporters of the resolution disputed that framing and pointed to the surrounding deployment and boat strikes. These competing positions should be attributed, not resolved by rhetorical shorthand. The episode shows that defining hostilities is itself part of the struggle over whether Congress can impose meaningful limits on presidential action. [15]

A Democratic majority in both chambers should make it easier to bring such disputes into sustained public examination. It does not remove the veto barrier or the executive latitude described in Reuters' post-election assessment. Nor does a renewed war-powers debate itself amount to an operational order ending a deployment. Caribbean governments should seek published legal reasoning and explicit congressional consideration of proposed action, while keeping expectations proportionate to the instruments available. Greater transparency would have value even where a statutory restriction remained beyond reach; secrecy and ambiguous authorisation make the assessment of regional risk harder. [5, 14, 15]

The outcome of 3 November is consequently best understood as an opening for accountable friction. Democrats have secured both chambers, with their Senate position strengthened by the Mississippi call, but the verified record does not support a complete final tally or an instant Caribbean policy reversal. Tariffs require current legal scrutiny; migration restrictions require exact categories; aid needs delivery institutions as well as money. The Caribbean's opportunity is to convert American institutional conflict into specific protections. Whether the new majority does so will be measured less by its language towards the region than by the decisions it can force Washington to explain, amend or abandon. [1, 3, 5]

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FOREST, RIVER, HORIZON *on page 75*

Opening artwork for “GUYANA’S SOVEREIGN DIVIDEND”.

ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR PEARCEROBINSON.COM

GUYANA'S SOVEREIGN DIVIDEND

Oil has given GUYANA *extraordinary revenues while its boundary case against* VENEZUELA *moves through The* HAGUE. *The harder test is whether a richer state can turn financial power into security for its citizens.*

By PEARCE ROBINSON · *Analysis*

THE DISTANCE TO SHORE

Guyana's oil boom can be measured with impressive precision. Its distribution is harder to establish. On 11 November 2026, Finance Minister Ashni Singh tabled the latest quarterly notification of petroleum receipts in the National Assembly. The government reported that the Natural Resource Fund held approximately US$5.5 billion at the end of September. The central bank's statement gives the more exact figure: US$5,472,911,327.29. Neither number, by itself, tells a household whether its circumstances have improved. That distance between a national balance sheet and a private life is now the country's central political question. [1, 2]

Offshore, the machinery continues to advance. Reporting published on 13 November put production at approximately 900,000 barrels a day from four Stabroek developments, with Uaru, the fifth, expected to begin in the fourth quarter. Its arrival was expected to take production beyond one million barrels daily. The distinction between an operating rate and an anticipated milestone matters: as of this reporting, the million-barrel threshold remained a projection, not an achievement to be written retrospectively into the record. [3]

The other defining national question is being considered in The Hague. Public hearings on the merits of Guyana's boundary case against Venezuela concluded on 11 May 2026. The International Court of Justice's case record reviewed for this article lists that conclusion, rather than a final merits judgment, as its latest development. Guyana therefore approaches the end of 2026 with expanding petroleum operations and an unresolved judicial process concerning the land boundary. Neither the oil industry's timetable nor political impatience can substitute for the Court's decision. [4]

These are connected stories, but they should not be collapsed into one. The boundary controversy long predates petroleum production, as the case's title, Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899, makes plain. Oil raises the contemporary stakes without explaining the dispute's origins. The more useful question is what kind of sovereignty Guyana can build while defending its territory: one secured by international law abroad, and made credible through demonstrable improvements in citizens' lives at home. [5]

THE ARITHMETIC OF ABUNDANCE

The scale of the transformation is obscured when every production figure is treated as interchangeable. Guyana produced 261.1 million barrels in 2025, according to its January 2026 budget speech, a figure also recorded in the IMF's October assessment. Dividing that annual total by 365 gives roughly 715,000 barrels a day. That is compatible with a much higher operating rate reached later in the year. An annual average incorporates the months before new capacity is fully available; a late-year production announcement does not. [6, 7]

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The IMF's October 2026 table projected 328.5 million barrels for the current year. It also projected real GDP growth of 22.3 per cent, following an estimated 19.3 per cent expansion in 2025. These are forecasts and estimates with explicit dates, not timeless descriptions. The same assessment reported robust non-oil activity, with non-oil GDP increasing by approximately 14 per cent in 2025. Guyana's expansion is therefore broader than offshore extraction, although that does not establish that the rest of the economy has become independent of petroleum-financed demand. [7]

Stabroek is the industrial centre of this change. The latest development reporting identifies ExxonMobil Guyana as operator with a 45 per cent interest, alongside Hess Guyana Exploration with 30 per cent and CNOOC Petroleum Guyana with 25 per cent. Those interests describe the commercial venture, not percentages of production automatically payable to Guyanese households. Between the physical extraction of a barrel and its contribution to public welfare lie contractual entitlements, government receipts and decisions about expenditure. Confusing those stages makes both celebration and criticism less informative. [3]

The next stage is already being financed. On 13 November, Offshore Energy reported the final investment decision for Longtail, the eighth Stabroek development, following the necessary approvals. The project targets gas and condensate-rich resources and is expected online in 2030, using a vessel designed to process 1.2 billion standard cubic feet of gas daily and produce up to 250,000 barrels of condensate a day. Those design specifications are not current output. Nor is the possible transport of gas ashore unconditional: the report explicitly ties it to further investment decisions, demand and infrastructure. [3]

"Between the physical extraction of a barrel and its contribution to public welfare lie contractual entitlements, government receipts and decisions about expenditure."

MONEY WITH A DESTINATION

The clearest way through the revenue debate is to follow the money actually received. The budget speech reported US$2.1 billion in profit-oil receipts during 2025 and US$330.7 million in royalties from the Stabroek operator. It also recorded a US$15 million signing bonus under a separate agreement for shallow-water Block S4. The categories matter. A signing bonus is not a recurring royalty, and proceeds received during one calendar year need not correspond exactly to oil lifted during that same year. [6]

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Indeed, the finance ministry explicitly explained the timing difference. Its 2025 profit-oil receipts included payments corresponding to two government lifts from the final quarter of 2024, as well as lifts during 2025 and the government's share of the inaugural lift from the One Guyana vessel. This is an important restraint on simplistic calculations. Dividing one year's government receipts by one year's production value will not necessarily reveal the contractual return on every barrel produced during that period. A cash account and a production account answer different questions. [6]

September's central-bank statement offers another useful distinction. It records the fund's assets entirely as cash and cash equivalents, with no financial assets held at fair value through profit or loss. The statement is prepared on a cash basis and supplies its own exchange rate of G$208.50 to US$1. The US$5.47 billion closing balance is consequently a dated financial position, not a valuation of oil still underground, not total national petroleum earnings and not proof that any particular public project has been completed. [2]

There is nevertheless a real buffer here. The IMF's October assessment recognised that accumulating petroleum revenue had strengthened fiscal and external resilience. It also recommended saving a larger share of additional revenue if oil prices remained persistently high, with spending calibrated to the economy's ability to use it effectively. The argument is not that Guyana should leave urgent needs unanswered. It is that available dollars and available implementation capacity are different resources; wasting the second can dissipate the first. [7]

THE MANDATE AND THE MACHINERY

The government directing this transformation secured a renewed electoral mandate in September 2025. The Guyana Elections Commission declared the People's Progressive Party/Civic the winner of the 1 September general and regional elections and declared Irfaan Ali elected president on 6 September. The commission's release grounds that declaration in the constitutional procedure for determining the presidency from competing party lists. For a petroleum state, the existence of a clear electoral result is significant, but it is the beginning of democratic accountability rather than its completion. [8]

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The official government account of the results gives the PPP/C 36 National Assembly seats, newcomer We Invest in Nationhood 16, A Partnership for National Unity 12 and the Forward Guyana Movement one. The distribution establishes two things worth keeping separate: the governing party won a majority, and the opposition landscape changed substantially. Oil policy will therefore be scrutinised by an assembly in which the largest opposition party is no longer the old principal challenger. The figures do not, by themselves, explain why individual electors voted as they did. [9]

A mandate to develop the country does not settle the quality of each development decision. In October, the IMF identified resolving outstanding cost-oil audits, improving the timeliness of public-enterprise and agency accounts, strengthening audit capacity and ensuring consistent compliance with procurement rules as priorities. These are institutional recommendations, not findings that any named official committed an offence. Their significance is practical: scrutiny has to be strong enough to follow the expanding financial flows without requiring citizens to rely on assurances of good intention. [7]

The crucial democratic test is whether expenditure can be interrogated while it is happening. An announced allocation should be distinguishable from a contract award; an award from payment; payment from a functioning service. That is a proposed standard of accountability, not an allegation about a particular contract. It follows directly from the IMF's emphasis on spending oversight and procurement compliance. Parliamentary majorities can authorise programmes, but only accessible evidence can establish whether those programmes deliver what their advocates promised. [7]

"Their significance is practical: scrutiny has to be strong enough to follow the expanding financial flows without requiring citizens to rely on assurances of good intention."

THE BOUNDARY BEFORE THE BARRELS

The case before the ICJ concerns the validity and binding effect of the 1899 arbitral award and the related land-boundary question. Guyana instituted proceedings on 29 March 2018. Its jurisdictional argument relied on the 1966 Geneva Agreement and the UN Secretary-General's January 2018 decision choosing the Court as the means of settlement. This legal route is important because it places the controversy within an agreed diplomatic history rather than treating adjudication as a device invented in response to the oil boom. [5]

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Venezuela disputed the Court's jurisdiction. In December 2020, however, the ICJ held that it had jurisdiction over the validity of the award and the related definitive settlement of the land boundary. In April 2023 it rejected Venezuela's preliminary objection and found it could proceed to the merits within the scope already defined. Those were substantial procedural decisions. They should not be misrepresented as a final ruling on the merits, just as Venezuela's rejection of jurisdiction should not be presented as if it erased the Court's own determinations. [5]

The protective orders are equally precise. On 1 December 2023, the Court directed Venezuela not to take action modifying the prevailing situation in the disputed territory, where Guyana administers and exercises control. It directed both parties to refrain from actions that might aggravate or extend the dispute or make it harder to resolve. The order protected the territorial status quo pending the final decision. It did not require journalists to describe every subsequent political declaration as an accomplished change of sovereignty. [10]

On 1 May 2025, the Court reaffirmed those measures unanimously and, by twelve votes to three, added an instruction that Venezuela refrain from conducting elections, or preparing to conduct them, in the disputed territory administered and controlled by Guyana. The geographical wording matters. The Court's summary also records that the three dissenting judges agreed with the substance of the additional protection but considered the original order already sufficient. Their disagreement was not an endorsement of taking territory through an electoral exercise. [10]

A STATE ON PAPER

Venezuela's "Guayana Esequiba" measures belong in that legal context. The Court's May 2025 summary records that after the December 2023 referendum, presidential decrees sought to establish a defence zone, designate a sole authority, authorise state companies to grant resource concessions and incorporate the disputed territory into official maps. These were Venezuelan measures directed at acquiring and exercising administration and control, as the Court described them. They were not evidence that Guyana had surrendered administration or that the boundary had legally moved. [10]

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The subsequent organic law was adopted by Venezuela's National Assembly on 21 March 2024 and entered into force on 3 April 2024, according to the Court. It purported to create the state of Guayana Esequiba within Venezuela's territorial and political organisation and vest Venezuelan institutions with executive, legislative and judicial powers over it. It also addressed contracts involving entities operating under Guyanese concessions. This was more than cartographic theatre: the legislation attempted to translate a territorial claim into a domestic administrative and commercial framework. [10]

In January 2025, Venezuela's president announced an election for the proposed state's governor. The electoral authority subsequently announced 25 May as the date for electing a governor, legislative council and deputies. The Court considered these developments, together with the earlier decrees and organic law, grave changes that significantly increased the risk of Venezuela acquiring control. That assessment is stronger and more exact than an unsupported prediction of imminent invasion. It identifies a demonstrated pattern of official action while leaving room to distinguish risk from an event that has actually occurred. [10]

The broader lesson concerns the accumulation of administrative assertions. A map, a purported office and a licensing claim can each be presented domestically as routine state business. Together they seek to make a contested proposition appear normal. Guyana's interest is therefore not served by treating the controversy as a sequence of isolated spectacles. Its legal strategy depends on preserving the distinction between Venezuela's claim and Guyana's continuing administration, while maintaining the evidential record on which the Court can act. The May 2026 merits hearings mark the next judicial stage, not permission to abandon that discipline. [4, 10]

"The COURT *considered these developments, together with the earlier decrees and organic law, grave changes that significantly increased the risk of* VENEZUELA *acquiring control."*

THE CARIBBEAN'S EXPOSURE

For the Caribbean, Guyana presents a question larger than the fortunes of one producer. The legal principle at issue is whether a territorial controversy can be managed without allowing unilateral administrative measures to determine the outcome. The Court's repeated insistence on preserving the situation on the ground supplies a defensible regional position: peaceful settlement requires restraint during proceedings, not simply promises to consider peace after a favourable result. That position remains coherent whether neighbouring governments welcome or dislike the petroleum companies involved. [10]

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The commercial structure also complicates any easy description of the boom as belonging to a single outside patron. Stabroek's venture includes ExxonMobil, Hess Guyana Exploration and CNOOC Petroleum Guyana. Their participation creates important external interests, but commercial ownership is not a substitute for Guyanese sovereignty. A Caribbean reading should resist the assumption that protecting investment and protecting a state are always identical tasks. The state must preserve room to regulate, audit and determine its own development priorities even when foreign capital is central to production. [3, 7]

That is why domestic economic management has regional significance. The IMF expects continued non-oil growth and sees the Gas-to-Energy project as a means of reducing reliance on fuel-based generation, lowering energy costs and supporting competitiveness. These are potential foundations for a more durable economy, not automatic consequences of exporting crude. If petroleum-financed investment improves productive capacity, Guyana's development could become broader than extraction. If it mainly raises costs and dependence on spending, the headline growth rate will offer a misleading guide to resilience. [7]

The environmental exposure also belongs in this calculation. The IMF identifies climate shocks among the downside risks and recommends investment in sea defences, drainage and climate-resilient agriculture. Such expenditure can appear less dramatic than another offshore project, yet its sovereign value is immediate: productive land and public infrastructure must remain usable. A Caribbean development strategy should evaluate the oil windfall partly by whether it reduces vulnerability to the region's familiar physical hazards, rather than measuring success only through extraction volumes or the size of the next national budget. [7]

THE CITIZEN'S BALANCE SHEET

There is evidence of direct redistribution, though its timing must be stated honestly. The January 2026 budget speech said the national G$100,000 grant initiated in late 2024 had transferred more than G$60 billion to over 600,000 adult Guyanese. It announced another G$100,000 grant for eligible adults in 2026. The earlier payment and the later promise should not be merged into a claim that every intended recipient had already received both. Government reporting establishes the announced measure and the reported earlier distribution, not a complete independent audit of household benefit. [6]

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Cash can provide immediate relief without answering the entire distributional question. The relevant comparison is purchasing power after changes in living costs, alongside access to services that households cannot efficiently buy for themselves. The IMF reported average inflation of 3.3 per cent in 2025 and an increase in 2026 reflecting global food and energy prices. It recommended support for vulnerable people and better targeting of subsidies. Its assessment also cautioned that wage and competitiveness indicators required monitoring, while finding no clear evidence of overheating in the available indicators. [7]

The evidence on deprivation requires equal care. Americas Quarterly's January 2026 country snapshot listed a 58 per cent poverty estimate for 2023, using an IDB-sourced threshold of US$6.85 a day in 2017 purchasing-power terms. That is a dated estimate under a specified definition, not a verified poverty rate for November 2026. It cannot establish that the subsequent boom has failed, and it cannot be wished away by citing GDP per head. The IMF's call for a new household budget survey underlines the need for stronger evidence about who is gaining. [11, 7]

"Its assessment also cautioned that wage and competitiveness indicators required monitoring, while finding no clear evidence of overheating in the available indicators."

Guyana's position is therefore neither a completed success nor a foreordained resource curse. The latest records show substantial public financial assets, extraordinary production and a renewed elected government; they also identify unfinished work in oversight, statistics and economic diversification. The boundary case asks whether law can protect the country's territorial position. The development question asks whether its wealth can protect citizens against avoidable insecurity. The most persuasive answer to both would be a state whose authority is visible not merely in maps and accounts, but in dependable services and independently demonstrable improvements in everyday life. [2, 4, 7, 9]

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THE STORM AND THE INVOICE *on page 84*

Opening artwork for "The islands and the invoice".

ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR PEARCEROBINSON.COM

THE ISLANDS AND THE INVOICE

From JAMAICA'S *hurricane losses to the unfinished negotiations in* ANTALYA, *climate finance is being tested against the cost of keeping small states viable. The reckoning turns on a harder question than how much money is promised: who ultimately carries the risk.*

By PEARCE ROBINSON · *Analysis*

THE BILL COMES ASHORE

The most revealing climate-finance document of the past year was not a summit declaration. It was an estimate of broken things. On 19 November 2025, while the Belém negotiations were still under way, the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank put the physical damage from Hurricane Melissa in Jamaica at US$8.8 billion. Their rapid assessment covered buildings, infrastructure and agriculture; it explicitly excluded the wider economic losses. Even before accounting for interrupted earnings and production, the destruction had acquired a scale against which diplomatic announcements could be measured. [1]

The composition of that preliminary bill matters. Residential buildings accounted for 41 per cent of assessed damage, infrastructure for 33 per cent and non-residential buildings for 21 per cent. Agriculture's smaller share measured damaged physical assets, not the full economic consequences for the sector. These distinctions are easy to lose when disaster becomes a single headline number. For a government deciding what to restore first, they distinguish the replacement of a bridge from the restoration of the livelihoods that depend on it. [1]

Jamaica had prepared financially. CCRIF, the regional parametric insurer, announced US$91.9 million across tropical-cyclone and excess-rainfall policies, including an US$8 million advance delivered on 3 November. A separate World Bank catastrophe bond triggered its full US$150 million coverage. These were substantial, deliberately prearranged sources of emergency liquidity. Together, the two insurance instruments represented about 2.7 per cent of the subsequent US$8.8 billion physical-damage estimate: an illustrative comparison, not a measure of whether the policies fulfilled their contracts. [1, 2, 3]

That comparison captures the islands' predicament more clearly than the familiar argument between optimism and despair. A financing instrument can perform as designed while leaving an immense recovery problem. Speed is valuable; so is preparation. Neither establishes that the distribution of the remaining bill is fair. The Caribbean's climate-finance reckoning begins at this junction, where successful disaster management meets losses too large for an insurance payout to absorb, and where a state's capacity to borrow risks becoming the international system's default answer. [1, 2, 3]

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BELÉM'S LONG HORIZON

COP30 did produce decisions. The Brazilian presidency's account records 56 consensus outcomes and, within the central Mutirão decision, a call to triple adaptation finance by 2035. It established the Global Implementation Accelerator and the Belém Mission for 1.5°C, launched a climate-finance work programme and formally recognised the Baku-to-Belém Roadmap to US$1.3 trillion. This was an expansion of the machinery for implementation. It was not evidence that the resulting finance had already reached national budgets, still less the households whose roofs and incomes had disappeared. [4]

The summit closed on 22 November without the clear new commitment to move away from fossil fuels that many participants had sought. UN News reported that more than 80 countries backed Brazil's proposal for a formal transition roadmap, but that the adopted outcome referred instead to the earlier UAE Consensus. Brazil's presidency announced separate work on transition and deforestation roadmaps. For islands, this unresolved mitigation argument belongs inside the finance debate: money for recovery becomes less adequate if the underlying danger continues to grow. [5]

The crucial distinction is between a negotiating achievement and an entitlement to resources. The 2035 adaptation objective sets a direction; its usefulness depends on a measurable starting point and a route to delivery. As COP31 negotiations continued on 13 November 2026, countries were still disagreeing over the baseline for measuring the promised tripling. António Guterres warned that even a threefold increase would meet less than 30 per cent of need. An impressive multiplier can therefore coexist with both an accounting dispute and profound insufficiency. [6]

That does not make the Belém package worthless. Common decisions can strengthen negotiating leverage and organise institutions around a shared task. But the relevant Caribbean test is more demanding than the number of mandates created. Does an agreement lower the price of protecting public infrastructure? Does it reduce the debt required after destruction? A deadline nine years beyond the magazine's publication date cannot itself answer the immediate question Jamaica's damage assessment posed. Belém supplied additional political machinery; its adequacy must be judged through what that machinery delivers. [1, 4]

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THE TRILLION-DOLLAR DISTANCE

The Baku-to-Belém roadmap is especially vulnerable to being mistaken for money already available. The COP30 presidency's November 2026 update describes a framework first presented jointly with the COP29 presidency in November 2025, with five action fronts and more than 75 suggested measures. Its scope is finance from public and private sources for developing countries. The broader US$1.3 trillion annual ambition for 2035 should not be confused with the distinct US$300 billion annual goal that developed countries are expected to lead efforts to mobilise. [7, 6]

The latest implementation report, presented on 8 November 2026, is instructive precisely because it separates possibility from trajectory. The presidency says concerted policy and financial interventions could produce between US$1.27 trillion and US$1.41 trillion a year by 2035. Under business as usual, it puts the range at only US$458 billion to US$461 billion. That is a scenario comparison, not a funding announcement. The distance between the two paths describes the work governments and institutions would still have to undertake, rather than an account from which island states can draw. [7]

"The distance between the two paths describes the work governments and institutions would still have to undertake, rather than an account from which island states can draw."

The proposed sources include concessional finance, private investment, South–South cooperation, the channelling of Special Drawing Rights, innovative mechanisms and carbon markets. The same update introduces monitoring across scale, speed, reach and impact. Those last three dimensions are particularly important for small states. A large aggregate can conceal long delays or a concentration of investment in places where transactions are easier. Finance can expand globally without becoming accessible on terms suitable for a small administration rebuilding essential services after a disaster. That is a risk the framework should expose, not an outcome to assume away. [7]

A Caribbean reading should therefore insist on tracing the financing chain. Private investment, a concessional loan and a grant are different claims on future resources. A guarantee is different again: it may make finance cheaper without paying for construction itself. Adding these categories without explaining their relationships invites a misleading impression of abundance. The roadmap's value will lie in whether it changes the terms and distribution of actual finance, not whether a collection of plausible interventions can be arranged to reach a sufficiently large total on paper. [7]

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THE WAITING FUND

The Fund for responding to Loss and Damage offers the sharpest test of the distance between institutional creation and usable support. Its own concept note for a COP31 event on 14 November 2026 says the first call under the Barbados Implementation Modalities closed in June. It attracted 176 requests covering 119 countries, seeking approximately US$2.8 billion. The original US$250 million allocation was increased to US$342 million in July. Even after that increase, the requested amount was more than eight times the available start-up allocation. [8]

The same contemporary document supplies the essential answer about disbursement: requests were still under review, with the first funding decisions expected at the board's tenth meeting in December 2026. That is not a verified record of money paid to affected countries. The distinction deserves unusually plain language because an operational fund, an open application window, a board approval and a completed transfer are different stages. As at 14 November, the evidence supports a programme preparing its first decisions, not a claim that this initial funding round had already financed recovery. [8]

There had been an exceptional development. On 22 October the fund reported that its board had provisionally set aside US$21.6 million for Nepal after the Bhote Koshi flash floods, allowing a request outside the standard submission period. The operative words were provisional allocation and permission to submit. Neither should be rewritten as a completed payment. The exception nevertheless demonstrates that the board can alter its procedures when confronted with urgent need. The question for vulnerable states is whether responsiveness can become an ordinary institutional capability rather than an exceptional concession. [9]

Some scrutiny is indispensable: public money needs safeguards, and countries should shape what recovery means in their own circumstances. Yet the fund's present timetable exposes the difficulty of reconciling an application-based institution with losses that arrive suddenly. The honest assessment is neither that the fund has achieved nothing nor that its creation has settled the argument. Demand has become measurable; available resources remain much smaller; the first standard funding decisions are still ahead. For island negotiators, a credible disbursement calendar is now as important as another celebration of operationalisation. [8, 9]

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WHAT INSURANCE CAN CARRY

CCRIF illustrates what genuinely prearranged finance can do. Its November 2025 announcement explained that Jamaica's tropical-cyclone cover used modelled losses from wind and storm surge, while excess-rainfall cover reflected the volume and distribution of rain. Payment followed those contractual parameters, rather than a final assessment of every damaged asset. The advance and the commitment to complete payments within 14 days were central to its purpose. The product was designed to put liquidity into government hands quickly, not to settle the entire national reconstruction bill. [2]

The separate catastrophe bond made another part of the bargain explicit. A third-party calculation agent determined that Melissa's pressure and path had met the agreed triggers for full redemption of the US$150 million coverage. Financial risk had been transferred to capital markets before the storm. The achievement is real: resources became available under rules established in advance. But a parametric trigger is not a moral assessment of suffering, and the face value of a bond is not a promise to restore everything that the triggering event destroys. [3]

"But a parametric trigger is not a moral assessment of suffering, and the face value of a bond is not a promise to restore everything that the triggering event destroys."

Jamaica's wider package makes the accounting problem clearer. On 1 December 2025, five international financial institutions announced up to US$6.7 billion over three years for recovery and reconstruction. The World Bank described a combination of emergency preparedness financing, sovereign financing, grants and private investment. It also recorded US$662 million in immediate liquidity, including Jamaica's own contingency resources. These were different pools and timeframes. The three-year package should not be described as a US$6.7 billion grant, nor should its headline be added indiscriminately to emergency instruments already counted within the response. [10]

The lesson is to preserve the layered system while refusing to make it carry an impossible political burden. Insurance should be judged against its coverage and its speed; reconstruction finance against its affordability and the assets restored. Loss-and-damage support raises another question, about who should bear costs that exceed national preparation. When these functions are blurred, governments can be praised for prudence and then left to finance most of the residual loss through their own balance sheets. Jamaica's experience is a warning against treating better risk management as a substitute for greater international responsibility. [1, 2, 10]

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THE CONVERSION TRADE

Debt-for-climate swaps offer a more targeted intervention. Barbados' completed debt-for-climate-resilience operation replaced more expensive debt with cheaper financing, generating US$125 million in fiscal savings, according to the Inter-American Development Bank. The arrangement was backed by US$300 million in guarantees, divided equally between the IDB and European Investment Bank, and used a long-tenor local-currency loan arranged by CIBC Caribbean. Its purpose was concrete: financing more resilient water and sewage infrastructure, including conversion of the South Coast treatment plant into a water-reclamation facility. [11]

The design matters more than the novelty label. The IDB describes additional upfront project finance of US$110 million from itself and the Green Climate Fund, including a US$40 million GCF grant. The sustainability-linked loan ties performance to the volume and quality of reclaimed water; failure to meet targets brings a financial penalty directed into an environmental trust. This is a package with separate components, not a magical cancellation of the cost of adaptation. Its merit lies in making a useful investment more feasible while improving the financing terms. [11]

The Bridgetown Initiative's January 2026 position note places such transactions within a broader strategy. It reports that eight swaps since 2021 refinanced US$6 billion and mobilised nearly US$2 billion for investment. Its central argument is that credit enhancement, including guarantees or insurance, can make further transactions possible. These are the initiative's own reported figures and policy conclusions, not an independent verdict on every deal. They nonetheless show an agenda moving beyond general appeals into the practical question of how to make cheaper refinancing available to more governments. [12]

The limitation follows from the mechanism. Savings depend on obtaining sufficiently better financing terms after the costs and obligations of the transaction are considered. A swap cannot be assumed to produce adequate resources wherever debt is high, and it should not displace a necessary restructuring. Public assessment should follow the net savings and the completed investment, rather than the amount of debt bearing a new label. Barbados' water operation is best understood as a potentially useful model for particular circumstances, not a universal substitute for grants or a settlement of the climate-finance deficit. [11, 12]

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ROOM TO BREATHE

Climate-resilient debt clauses address a different pressure: the demand to service loans immediately after catastrophe. The World Bank's crisis-toolkit page, updated on 2 November 2026, says its clause has been expanded to cover all existing loans in eligible small-island and other small states. It permits deferral of principal and interest, with enabling fees covered by concessional resources, and includes a wider range of hazards. The page also describes a simpler application process, allowing a request following a declaration of national emergency rather than relying on certain parametric triggers. [13]

A payment pause preserves cash when its immediate social value may be greatest. It does not, by itself, extinguish principal. This distinction places a limit on the language of resilience: relief from today's payment can still leave tomorrow's debt. Clauses deserve support because contractual flexibility is better than having to improvise it after destruction. They also deserve examination alongside the repayment schedule that follows. The relevant question is whether the borrower emerges with a manageable recovery path, rather than merely a short interval before the same obligations resume. [13]

"The page also describes a simpler application process, allowing a request following a declaration of national emergency rather than relying on certain parametric triggers."

Barbados' prime minister, Mia Mottley, used an April 2026 V20 address to argue that these instruments were no longer confined to official creditors. She pointed to the country's US$500 million bond issuance the previous June, saying it included disaster and pandemic pause clauses and attracted interest approaching six times the amount. This is an attributed account of Barbados' market experience, not proof that every island would receive identical terms. It does rebut the assumption that private-market borrowing and contractual protection against shocks must always be incompatible. [14]

The IMF relationship has also moved on. In June 2026 its board approved a 36-month precautionary Stand-By Arrangement for Barbados worth about US$257 million; the authorities intended to treat it as insurance against balance-of-payments shocks. The announcement paired resilience objectives with strong fiscal accounts and a public-debt target of 60 per cent of GDP by fiscal year 2035/36. This is a current macroeconomic backstop, not a climate grant. The combination illustrates the unresolved task for IMF reform: protecting stability without making investment in future resilience the adjustment margin whenever shocks arrive. [15]

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ANTALYA'S UNFINISHED LEDGER

As this issue closes on 14 November 2026, COP31 is under way in Antalya, not concluded. UN News' account of the previous day describes a first outline of a possible political declaration, with finance and fossil fuels still unresolved. Negotiators remain divided over predictable loss-and-damage resources and over how to measure the adaptation-finance increase. Those are negotiations in progress, not outcomes that can responsibly be anticipated. The latest summit is already testing whether Belém's implementation language can acquire sufficiently clear obligations to change the position of vulnerable countries. [6]

The Bridgetown agenda remains active, though its ambitions should not be confused with adopted international rules. In April, Mottley called for a grant floor around 25 per cent in the financing approach under discussion for education, health and water, alongside 40- and 50-year loans for those sectors. The 2026 debt-swaps note presses for expanded credit enhancement. Together these interventions show a continuing effort to change the structure of finance, beyond securing a succession of exceptional transactions. They do not establish that the proposed terms have become generally available. [12, 14]

A useful reform standard would begin with the borrower's complete position after the transaction. World Bank guarantees can lower costs; debt clauses can release emergency cash; an IMF backstop can protect external stability. Each solves part of a problem. None automatically supplies the grant resources required when losses overwhelm the revenue available to service new debt. Reform should be assessed by the combined effect on fiscal space and essential investment, with financing costs and future obligations made visible. Counting each instrument as an independent success risks overlooking a country whose aggregate burden remains unmanageable. [11, 13, 15]

Jamaica's damaged homes provide the discipline that summit accounting needs. Belém established more machinery; the roadmap identifies a route towards much larger finance; the loss-and-damage fund is approaching decisions rather than demonstrating a completed first funding round. These are meaningful developments, but they occupy different columns of the ledger. For small island states, the decisive transfer is the movement of risk away from people and public budgets that cannot reasonably absorb it. Until that can be demonstrated in actual terms and payments, the invoice remains more tangible than the promise. [1, 4, 7, 8]

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FIVE ISLANDS, ONE GATE *on page 95*

Opening artwork for "The passport bargain comes due".

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THE PASSPORT BARGAIN COMES DUE

EASTERN CARIBBEAN governments turned citizenship into a source of development finance, but the countries controlling its most valuable travel privileges are rewriting the bargain. Under EUROPEAN and AMERICAN pressure, the region must defend its sovereignty without mistaking a volatile revenue stream for a permanent economic settlement.

By PEARCE ROBINSON · *Analysis*

A DEADLINE BEYOND THE HORIZON

The most consequential sentence in Dominica's statement of 28 October 2026 concerned a date almost two years away. The European Union, the government said, had indicated that Dominica and other Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States countries operating citizenship-by-investment programmes must transition away from them by June 2028 to retain visa-free access to the Schengen Area. The statement did not announce the programme's closure. It described discussions about realistic timeframes, financial assistance and alternative revenues, and promised further communication with the EU by 12 November. That distinction matters: a demand from abroad, a government's negotiating position and a legally enacted termination are different events. [1]

For Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St Kitts and Nevis, and St Lucia, the argument has nevertheless moved beyond the familiar question of whether applicants are screened thoroughly enough. Europe's revised visa-suspension machinery expressly addresses investor citizenship granted without a genuine link to the issuing country. Its leverage reaches something governments cannot manufacture domestically: the willingness of other states to admit their nationals without first requiring visas. The sovereignty to confer nationality remains; the commercial value attached to that nationality is partly controlled elsewhere. [2]

Washington has demonstrated another form of exposure. A presidential proclamation signed on 16 December 2025 imposed partial entry restrictions on nationals of Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica from 1 January 2026, identifying citizenship by investment without residency as a concern. These were not measures against every Eastern Caribbean programme, nor restrictions confined to people who had purchased citizenship. Subject to the proclamation's scope and exceptions, nationality itself became the relevant category. A policy intended to raise money from newcomers could therefore impose travel costs on people whose citizenship had never been a transaction. [3]

The resulting dilemma is sharper than the phrase golden passports suggests. A source of public finance has become entangled with the ordinary mobility of an entire population. Governments must weigh money available for development against access enjoyed by citizens, while negotiating with much larger powers that can alter the terms of entry. The commercially attractive promise was additional freedom of movement. The public-policy question now is how much collective vulnerability a small state should accept to sell it.

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THE PRICE OF BELONGING

The five governments have already tried to change the economics of competition. Their regional memorandum established a minimum of US$200,000 for citizenship-by-investment options from 1 July 2024, covering sums paid into government funds, government projects or private development projects. An OECS announcement, also published by St Lucia's government, stated that discounting below the agreed minimum was illegal. This was a common floor, not a universal quotation for every family or route, and it should not be confused with a promise that the minimum would remain unchanged indefinitely. [4]

A price floor is an admission that these countries share a market as well as a neighbourhood. If one programme competes principally by undercutting another, each government may receive less for assuming obligations that endure long after an application is approved. Regional coordination can prevent some of that erosion. Yet it cannot determine demand independently of the travel privileges buyers expect. Raising the minimum contribution does not repair the product if its most desirable external benefits are being withdrawn.

The same memorandum envisaged a regional regulator, information-sharing and common standards. Its proposed interim commission would include representatives of the five participating countries, the OECS Commission and the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank. The intended functions included developing and enforcing regional standards and monitoring compliance. The agreement therefore addressed more than revenue: it acknowledged that confidence in one programme could depend on the conduct of its neighbours, and that national administration alone might not adequately protect a shared reputation. [4]

"If one programme competes principally by undercutting another, each government may receive less for assuming obligations that endure long after an application is approved."

There is a defensible Caribbean argument here. Small states need not be condemned to negotiate separately with applicants, intermediaries and powerful foreign governments. Collective standards can increase bargaining power and reduce incentives to compete away safeguards. But the test of coordination is what happens when enforcement becomes expensive. A regional undertaking carries little weight if an individual government can preserve its immediate receipts while leaving the reputational consequences to everybody else. The price agreement is best understood as an institutional beginning, rather than proof that the underlying problem has been solved.

BRUSSELS CHANGES THE QUESTION

The Council of the European Union gave final approval to the revised suspension rules on 17 November 2025. Among the new grounds was an investor-citizenship scheme through which people without a genuine link to the country obtain nationality. The initial temporary suspension period was extended to twelve months, with a possible further twenty-four months. The Council described that interval as time for engagement and remediation before visa-free status could be permanently revoked. A legal mechanism is not an automatic suspension, but it makes the threat more usable. [2]

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The genuine-link formulation changes the nature of the dispute. Better background checks address whether an applicant presents an unacceptable risk. They do not necessarily answer whether citizenship should be granted to someone with little substantive connection to the country. A programme might improve its investigations and still remain exposed to the European objection. For Caribbean governments, this creates an uncomfortable possibility: expensive compliance reforms may be necessary for credibility without being sufficient to preserve the existing business model.

Europe's rules also distinguish visa-free short visits from the much broader rights sometimes implied by passport marketing. Schengen visa exemption is not a grant of European citizenship or a general entitlement to settle and work. Its value lies in removing a preliminary permission requirement for eligible travel. That is still economically and personally significant, but it is a benefit administered by the receiving jurisdictions. The Council's account of the revised mechanism makes explicit that those jurisdictions can withdraw it when specified conditions arise. [2]

Dominica's October statement should therefore be read closely rather than embellished. It attributes the June 2028 transition requirement to the EU, identifies the amended regulation and seeks a managed adjustment. It does not itself establish an agreed regional closure date or announce that Schengen access has already been suspended. As at the magazine's November reporting point, the verified statement supports a conclusion of serious, time-bound pressure, not an invented account of completed abolition. Responsible reporting must preserve that uncertainty even when commercial advisers prefer a simpler countdown. [1]

WASHINGTON'S WIDER NET

The American proclamation operates differently. It added Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica to countries facing partial restrictions, suspending entry as immigrants and in the B-1, B-2, B-1/B-2, F, M and J non-immigrant categories. Those categories encompass important forms of business and visitor travel, study and exchange. The text specifically cited citizenship-by-investment arrangements without residency in its country explanations. St Kitts and Nevis, Grenada and St Lucia were not included in those two Caribbean country provisions; describing the measure as a ban on all five programmes would be inaccurate. [3]

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Its limitations are equally important. The proclamation generally applies to designated nationals outside the United States on the applicable effective date who did not then hold a valid visa. It includes exceptions for lawful permanent residents and dual nationals travelling on passports issued by non-designated countries, alongside specified official and other categories. It also provides for certain case-by-case exceptions and states that previously issued visas are not revoked pursuant to the proclamation. These qualifications prevent a partial, conditional restriction from honestly being summarised as a blanket prohibition on every Antiguan or Dominican traveller. [3]

Nonetheless, the political externality is substantial. The relevant provisions distinguish people by nationality rather than simply isolating citizenship-by-investment beneficiaries. A native-born citizen can therefore fall within the same framework as an investor-naturalised citizen, depending on the other conditions. That distributes part of the programme's risk across the existing population. Governments defending the policy must account for that distribution openly: the benefit appears in public finances, while an important cost may be borne in an individual's interrupted education, family visit or business plans.

This danger was not wholly new. Britain introduced a visa requirement for Dominican nationals in July 2023, explicitly linking its decision to concerns about Dominica's citizenship-by-investment programme. A British announcement reproduced by St Kitts and Nevis's foreign ministry said the change applied to all Dominican nationals, with transitional arrangements for certain previously booked journeys. The episode established the central asymmetry well before the latest American measures: a government can confer nationality on an applicant, but cannot guarantee that other governments will continue treating that nationality as they did before. [5]

"Britain introduced a visa requirement for DOMINICAN *nationals in* JULY *2023, explicitly linking its decision to concerns about* DOMINICA'S *citizenship-by-investment programme."*

A REGULATOR, NOT A TALISMAN

The proposed institutional answer is the Eastern Caribbean Citizenship by Investment Regulatory Authority, ECCIRA. Its own published account says the establishing agreement was signed in September 2025 and given domestic legal force through enabling legislation in the five participating states during October and November that year. Crucially, the same institutional timeline says operations will commence in Grenada in late 2026, while recruitment remains ongoing. That supports describing an established legal framework moving towards operation, not confidently declaring a fully staffed regional regulator already exercising every intended power. [6]

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The distinction is reinforced by Dominica's October 2026 statement, which still described governments as working towards establishing the authority. Official descriptions can reflect different stages: agreement, legislation, staffing and effective supervision do not occur simultaneously. The sound approach is to identify the stage each document actually verifies. ECCIRA's published mandate is to set uniform standards, regulate the programmes and maintain public confidence. Whether it can demonstrate consistent enforcement is a further question, one that a timetable or an institutional website cannot settle. [1, 6]

The reform package announced by the OECS in September 2025 included mandatory collection of biometric data from new applicants at interview, collection from previously approved applicants at passport renewal, stronger residency and genuine-link requirements, and expanded vetting support through CARICOM IMPACS's Joint Regional Communications Centre. These are significant commitments. They should, however, be reported as announced provisions rather than treated as independently verified evidence that every participating programme has implemented each safeguard comprehensively and identically. [7]

For the regulator to matter, independence will have to mean more than regional branding. Credible supervision would require the ability to identify non-compliance, publish meaningful findings and make adverse decisions despite the revenue at stake. Those are proposed tests of effectiveness, not claims that ECCIRA has already failed them. The larger diplomatic difficulty remains: even exemplary supervision cannot compel Europe or the United States to accept citizenship without substantial residence. A stronger regulator can improve the region's position, but it cannot unilaterally write the receiving country's immigration policy.

WHEN THE WINDFALL RECEDES

The fiscal exposure is measurable. In its May 2026 assessment of St Kitts and Nevis, the IMF reported citizenship-by-investment fees equivalent to 22.2 per cent of GDP in 2023, 8.6 per cent in 2024 and 6 per cent in 2025. These are shares of economic output, not shares of government revenue, and the distinction is essential. The same assessment put the overall fiscal deficit at 11.7 per cent of GDP in 2025, government deposits at 7.2 per cent and public debt at 58.4 per cent. The reversal had already arrived before any hypothetical European withdrawal of visa exemption. [8]

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The figures do not establish that foreign restrictions caused the entire decline. They establish something more useful for fiscal policy: receipts can contract drastically while spending obligations remain. The IMF linked declining CBI income to widening deficits and recommended consolidation, stronger tax revenues and fiscal rules that reduce reliance on the programme. It also recommended implementing a Sovereign Wealth Resilience Fund to manage volatility, strengthen disaster resilience and support long-term sustainability. The relevant comparison is therefore not simply between having the programme and losing it, but between saving a windfall and building recurrent expenditure around one. [8]

Dominica faces its own constraints. IMF staff's March 2026 mission statement estimated public debt at 103 per cent of GDP for the fiscal year discussed and assessed debt as sustainable but at high risk of distress under the baseline. Staff called for strengthening the non-CBI fiscal balance while preserving critical social spending and growth-enhancing investment. This was a preliminary staff assessment, not the Executive Board's final judgement. It nonetheless exposes the narrowness of the adjustment space: reducing dependence must occur alongside substantial existing obligations and continuing disaster risks. [9]

Dominica's government, for its part, says programme revenue has financed infrastructure, disaster recovery and national resilience, reducing demands that might otherwise have fallen on public finances. That is the government's stated development case, not an independent audit of every project. Its request for transitional financial and technical assistance follows a coherent logic: if external policy deliberately accelerates the loss of a major financing instrument, adjustment cannot responsibly be reduced to an instruction to find another one. The credibility of that argument would be strengthened by transparent accounts showing receipts, commitments and the funding gap under different scenarios. [1]

"The relevant comparison is therefore not simply between having the programme and losing it, but between saving a windfall and building recurrent expenditure around one."

THE USES OF A REPRIEVE

Grenada offers evidence that the treatment of receipts can change the consequences of a shock. In its January 2026 consultation assessment, the IMF said prudent savings of recent citizenship-by-investment revenues and the effectiveness of post-disaster financing had created room for continued investment after Hurricane Beryl. The Fund described the fiscal position as comfortable despite an estimated 2025 primary deficit of 3.2 per cent of GDP. This does not make Grenada immune to programme disruption. It shows that saving during favourable years can purchase options when conditions deteriorate. [10]

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The comparison with St Kitts and Nevis should not become a moral ranking of governments facing different circumstances. It is an argument about fiscal architecture. A volatile source can finance one-off investment or build buffers more safely than it can underpin spending that is politically and socially difficult to reverse. Even infrastructure requires judgement: construction generates future maintenance costs, and a project's usefulness does not automatically establish its affordability. The strongest defence of CBI-funded development would explain both the asset created and the permanent obligations left behind.

Any reprieve secured through negotiation should therefore be treated as preparation time rather than permission to restore old assumptions. Budgets could separate conservative baseline receipts from exceptional income, disclose commitments against future programme proceeds and test a sustained fall in demand. These are policy recommendations grounded in the volatility documented by the IMF, not descriptions of a uniform framework already operating across the five states. The purpose would be to prevent a diplomatic concession from turning into another round of expenditure that makes the next confrontation harder to manage. [8]

Adjustment also has to be politically legible. Residents asked to accept higher taxes or fewer benefits deserve to know how much citizenship income was received, where it went and why alternatives were not developed sooner. Equally, overseas partners asking for closure should distinguish the interests of intermediaries from those of households relying on public services. A transition can be justified without treating every existing programme expenditure as wasteful, just as a defence of past investment need not imply that the financing model can continue indefinitely.

WHAT SOVEREIGNTY CAN BUY

The region's strongest negotiating position combines institutional seriousness with fiscal candour. Common prices and shared oversight make more sense than five governments separately promising that their own programme is the safest exception. Yet unity requires agreement about the objective. Preserving revenue at any cost is different from preserving visa-free access; introducing a genuine residential connection is different from defending citizenship obtainable largely through payment. European law has made those distinctions harder to evade. A coherent regional position must decide which features are essential and which can change. [2, 4]

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A residence-based alternative should not be advertised as an effortless replacement. Requiring people to spend meaningful time in a country changes the clientele and demands services, accommodation and administrative capacity. Nor does residence automatically guarantee foreign approval of a redesigned scheme. The central analytical point is that a more substantive connection would change what is being offered: from convenient nationality towards participation in a place. That might yield deeper economic relationships, but governments should not book hypothetical receipts before demonstrating that demand exists.

The case for external support is strongest when attached to a credible adjustment programme. Dominica has explicitly raised financial and technical assistance for alternative revenues, diversification and the protection of development gains. Support framed around measurable fiscal resilience would be more defensible than compensation calculated simply as the indefinite replacement of passport-sale income. Caribbean governments could reasonably ask partners to help finance a transition that preserves public investment, while accepting that transparency and reduced dependence are necessary conditions of a durable settlement. [1]

"Support framed around measurable fiscal resilience would be more defensible than compensation calculated simply as the indefinite replacement of passport-sale income."

Citizenship by investment has exposed an awkward boundary of sovereignty. A state may decide who belongs, but it cannot independently decide what that belonging will purchase at another country's border. The coming negotiation should protect the interests of existing citizens at least as carefully as those of prospective applicants. Its success will not ultimately be measured by the survival of a particular application route. It will be measured by whether these countries emerge with public finances less vulnerable to decisions made abroad, and with citizenship understood as a durable political relationship rather than a promise of access somebody else can withdraw.

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INTERLUDE · TRINIDAD

Mas

Feather, wire and sequin turned into pure colour: Carnival as the island's great act of collective design.

PALETTE KNIFE ON CANVAS. ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR PEARCEROBINSON.COM



DEPARTURES *on page 105*

Opening artwork for "The BORDER COMES HOME".

ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR PEARCEROBINSON.COM

THE BORDER COMES HOME

Deportation agreements, vanishing protections and a new tax on money sent home are drawing the CARIBBEAN *deeper into the migration politics of richer states.* ACROSS *the* ATLANTIC *and within the region itself, the question is who must carry the cost when permission to belong is withdrawn.*

By PEARCE ROBINSON · *Analysis*

AN EMAIL CAN BE A BORDER

The border need not announce itself with a fence. On 12 June 2025, the United States Department of Homeland Security began sending termination notices to people admitted under humanitarian parole programmes for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans. The department said the messages terminated parole and revoked the associated employment authorisation immediately. For recipients, a government email could therefore alter the legal foundations of an ordinary working day. The announcement concerned people whom the United States had previously permitted to enter; its warning to leave applied to those who had not obtained another lawful basis to remain. [1]

That distinction belongs at the centre of the Caribbean migration debate. A person who entered through an authorised programme can subsequently lose its protection. Someone whose temporary status ends does not thereby acquire a criminal conviction, nor does every affected person become immediately removable regardless of other claims. Political language often collapses these differences. Accurate scrutiny must restore them, because the practical consequences depend on the particular permission withdrawn and on whatever protection survives. The government's own account of the parole termination acknowledged that recipients might have obtained a separate lawful status. [1]

Haitian Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, followed a different legal route. A Congressional Research Service analysis updated on 10 July 2026 explained that the Supreme Court's decision in Mullin v. Doe allowed the administration to proceed with terminations affecting Haiti and Syria. The Court held that Congress had barred judicial review of non-constitutional challenges to such termination decisions. That was a ruling about statutory authority and the courts' reviewing role; it should not be mistaken for an independent humanitarian finding that Haiti had become safe for everyone to return. [2]

Together, these developments expose the vulnerability of a diaspora built partly on permissions that can be withdrawn. Caribbean governments cannot write American immigration law. They nevertheless have compelling reasons to follow its smallest distinctions: the same decision can interrupt a household's earnings abroad while creating new needs at home. The emerging question is broader than how many people will board deportation flights. It is how a region should plan when the legal continuity of its overseas communities becomes less dependable.

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THE MEANING OF RETURN

The Haitian TPS litigation demonstrates why yesterday's deadline is an unreliable guide to today's position. On 5 August 2026, immigration law firm BAL reported that the federal district court had confirmed its earlier stay against termination was no longer in effect following Supreme Court and appellate proceedings. The underlying litigation, however, remained pending, including constitutional claims. Those two propositions can coexist: a government can regain the ability to implement a termination while a challenge continues. Describing the case simply as either a permanent reprieve or a completely finished lawsuit would obscure the position reported that August. [3]

The human consequences require equal precision. The Congressional Research Service explained that the Supreme Court's ruling could allow removal of Haitian and Syrian nationals previously protected by TPS who had no other legal basis to remain. Losing TPS is consequently not the same event as being deported, although it may expose someone to that possibility. Between the two lie individual circumstances and further legal decisions. For consular officials, the useful response is case-specific information and access to competent advice, rather than a headline suggesting that every beneficiary shares an identical fate. [2]

"In its MARCH *2026 monitoring report, the* INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION *for* MIGRATION *recorded 22,060 forced returns to* HAITI, *23 per cent more than in* MARCH *2025."*

The receiving country's pressures must also be measured honestly. In its March 2026 monitoring report, the International Organization for Migration recorded 22,060 forced returns to Haiti, 23 per cent more than in March 2025. But 99 per cent came from the Dominican Republic. These were overwhelmingly movements across an intra-Caribbean border, not an American airlift. Using Haiti's total forced-return figures as a proxy for United States deportations would radically misdescribe the evidence and divert attention from the responsibilities of another state within the region. [4]

This geographical correction changes the politics. The Caribbean is a place from which people leave and a place in which governments detain, regularise or remove other migrants. A credible regional position should distinguish the return of a state's own nationals from the transfer of people who have no citizenship connection to it. It should also insist that the destination's practical capacity matters. Removal may close one administration's file while opening questions about accommodation, documentation and family support that another administration cannot resolve merely by acknowledging an arriving flight.

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SOMEONE ELSE'S DESTINATION

Third-country arrangements carry that transfer of responsibility further. On 8 January 2026, Dominica's prime ministerial press office described an arrangement, then being finalised, under which the country could receive third-country nationals facing removal from the United States. Its statement called the arrangement non-binding and emphasised Dominica's discretion to accept or decline proposed transfers. It also described advance disclosure of relevant medical or criminal records, subject to law, and a right to discontinue participation. This was a proposed role as a receiving state for other countries' nationals, rather than the ordinary acceptance of Dominican citizens. [5]

A subsequent report in Caribbean Life on 30 March recorded Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit's statement that the arrangement had been signed on 18 March. The newspaper reported an anticipated intake of about 28 people annually and repeated the government's assurances about discretion and screening. Those details matter: an agreement envisaging a small, individually assessed intake should not be described as an unlimited commitment. Equally, an announced annual expectation is not evidence that the expected people have actually arrived. Signing, implementation and completed transfers are distinct stages. [6]

Antigua and Barbuda's negotiations offer a warning against treating an early announcement as the final instrument. A government statement published by Antigua News Room on 28 September 2026 said that the United States proposal and Antigua and Barbuda's counter-proposal were being released and would be tabled in Parliament. It explicitly stated that no agreement had been concluded and discussions continued. For a November assessment, that later account must qualify the much simpler story circulating earlier in the year that neighbouring Caribbean governments had already settled their participation. [7]

The central test is therefore in the operating terms. A meaningful assessment would ask what legal status an accepted person receives, who funds accommodation and healthcare, and what remedy exists if protection is needed. Dominica's January statement promised treatment consistent with its Constitution, domestic law and international obligations, including the Refugee Convention and Convention against Torture. That commitment provides a benchmark against which implementation can be judged. Sovereign discretion is valuable, but its exercise should remain visible to Parliament and the public, and intelligible to the individual whose future is being negotiated. [5]

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THE PRICE OF SENDING HOME

A different border now sits at the remittance counter. The American legislation commonly known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act introduced a one per cent excise tax on certain remittance transfers after 31 December 2025. The Internal Revenue Service's April 2026 explanation specified transfers funded with cash, money orders, cashier's cheques or similar physical instruments. The sender is liable, while the provider must collect the tax. The precise scope is essential: this is not a blanket one per cent charge on every dollar sent from the United States to the Caribbean. [8]

The arithmetic is modest but persistent. A covered transfer of US$200 attracts US$2 in tax; twelve such transfers attract US$24, before considering the provider's separate charges. Those are illustrative calculations, not estimates of an average migrant's payments. Their importance depends on who uses the affected funding methods and whether an accessible alternative exists. A relatively small tax can matter more to a household making frequent, necessary transfers than to a casual sender, but the statutory rate alone cannot establish the distribution of that burden.

"The AMERICAN legislation commonly known as the One BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL ACT introduced a one per cent excise tax on certain remittance transfers after 31 DECEMBER 2025."

Nor should the charge be confused with a recipient-country levy or a deduction mechanically imposed on all incoming foreign exchange. The IRS announcement locates liability with the sender and collection with the transfer provider. Whether a family abroad ultimately receives less depends on how the sender responds: absorbing the additional cost preserves the intended remittance, while keeping total expenditure fixed may reduce it. Any claim about a measured Caribbean-wide loss would require evidence on covered transactions and actual behaviour. The law establishes a charge; it does not, by itself, establish its aggregate economic effect. [8]

The distinction between legislation and implementation also matters. The IRS's 10 April announcement introduced proposed regulations addressing definitions and application, including which physical instruments trigger the tax. A proposal should not be presented as though every interpretative detail were already a final rule. For Caribbean policymakers, the immediate practical task is clear communication about what is covered, alongside affordable access to compliant payment options. Advice should help households navigate the law without promising that a different product is universally available, cheaper or suitable for every sender. [8]

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THE HOUSEHOLD BALANCE SHEET

The sums acquire their significance against the region's remittance dependence. The World Bank's country data report personal remittances received by Jamaica at approximately 16.3 per cent of GDP in 2025. Its corresponding Haitian series gives approximately 16.9 per cent for 2024, the latest year displayed there. These are different reference years and should remain labelled as such. Even with that caution, both ratios show why the continuity of overseas earnings is a matter of economic importance at home, rather than a concern confined to migrants and their immediate relatives. [9, 10]

A remittance-to-GDP ratio needs careful interpretation. It compares the scale of incoming personal remittances with domestic output; it does not mean that each household receives that share of its income from abroad. Nor does it identify the proportion originating in the United States, the proportion sent using cash, or the share exposed to the new excise tax. Multiplying a country's entire remittance total by one per cent would therefore produce a misleading estimate of the American measure's impact. The World Bank figures establish scale, not the tax base. [8, 9, 10]

The deeper risk is the interaction between permission to work and the ability to support relatives. A transfer tax marginally raises the cost of a covered payment. Withdrawal of employment authorisation can threaten the earnings from which payments are made. The June 2025 parole notice expressly coupled the termination of permission to stay under the programme with revocation of parole-based work authorisation. It would be premature to assign a regional monetary loss to that decision without further evidence. It is nevertheless reasonable to treat employment continuity as at least as important a policy concern as transfer charges. [1]

This suggests a less sentimental account of diaspora policy. Celebrating overseas communities should be accompanied by useful legal information and preparation for involuntary return. At the same time, remittances remain private resources, not a substitute public treasury that governments can assume will always replenish itself. The policy objective should be to protect households' ability to make choices, while reducing the damage if an overseas income disappears. A country whose incoming remittances are large relative to output has good reason to examine that vulnerability without treating its emigrants as permanent fiscal instruments.

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BRITAIN'S MOVING THRESHOLD

Across the Atlantic, the United Kingdom has been tightening access through employment rules. Home Office sponsor guidance, updated on 8 April 2026, states that from 22 July 2025 a Skilled Worker job must normally be at graduate skill level, or appear on one of the specified exception lists. It also sets out transitional provisions for some previously sponsored workers. The distinction is between the assessed skill level of the job and the qualifications of every applicant: describing the change simply as a universal requirement that all migrants possess a degree would be inaccurate. [11]

The same guidance normally requires English at B2 level across reading, writing, speaking and listening. It retains B1 for qualifying workers whose previous Skilled Worker permission was granted under the rules in force before 8 January 2026 and whose most recent permission was on that route. Again, the transitional detail is part of the policy, not an administrative footnote. For Caribbean applicants, the relevant questions are which route applies and what evidence it requires. Broad assumptions about nationality or everyday English use cannot replace those route-specific requirements. [11]

"In particular, it reported that the proposed changes to qualifying periods for permanent residence were not coming into force until 2027."

Settlement reform requires a separate distinction between intention and commencement. A House of Commons Library briefing published on 3 November 2026 said that many proposals from the May 2025 immigration white paper had been implemented, while others remained ahead. In particular, it reported that the proposed changes to qualifying periods for permanent residence were not coming into force until 2027. The government's earned-settlement consultation proposed a ten-year baseline, with adjustments for different circumstances. Reporting that baseline as an already universal rule in November 2026 would run ahead of the parliamentary briefing. [12, 13]

For families making long-term decisions, a proposal can still create uncertainty before it becomes law. A longer expected journey to settlement would change the horizon against which someone assesses a job or plans a household. But responsible criticism must remain attached to the actual scope. The consultation expressly excluded grants of settlement under the Windrush Scheme and people already holding settled status. Recognising those exclusions does not settle the merits of the wider reform. It prevents a legitimate debate about future security from becoming an inaccurate claim that every existing right is being reopened. [13]

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THE DOCUMENT AND THE PERSON

Windrush supplies the indispensable historical warning. The Home Office-commissioned report The Historical Roots of the Windrush Scandal, published in September 2024, describes people who were wrongfully detained, denied rights, threatened with deportation or actually deported. It locates the scandal within the history of immigration policy and Britain's relationship with its former empire. The relevance is institutional, not merely commemorative. A system can inflict severe harm when its demand for documentary proof becomes detached from the rights and histories of the people required to produce it. [14]

Wendy Williams's independent review proposed 30 recommendations. As reproduced by the Office of the Windrush Commissioner, the first called for an unqualified apology and fundamental, sustainable changes to Home Office culture and working practices. Other recommendations concerned continued engagement with affected communities and the future of the Windrush Scheme. That framework treats repair as a continuing administrative obligation. It suggests that the real measure of learning is not the frequency of official remembrance, but whether future decisions become more attentive to evidence, individual circumstances and the consequences of error. [15]

The analogy has limits. Haitians with TPS, people admitted on humanitarian parole and the people harmed by Windrush do not occupy interchangeable legal positions. British wrongdoing cannot itself establish a right to permanent residence under an American temporary programme. Nor does the Windrush history prove that every contemporary British restriction will reproduce the same harm. Its strongest lesson is narrower and more useful: governments should understand the legal position of those affected, explain changes accurately, preserve reliable records and provide a workable means of correcting mistaken decisions. [2, 14]

That is a demanding standard for any state using uncertainty as an instrument of migration control. A person should be able to distinguish a proposal from an operative rule and a missing document from a missing entitlement. Caribbean diplomacy would gain force by insisting on these distinctions consistently. The argument is strongest when it defends administrative fairness for people arriving in the region as well as for its citizens abroad. Otherwise, Windrush risks becoming an exceptional claim to historical sympathy rather than a source of practical standards for governing migration.

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THE NEIGHBOUR AT THE DOOR

Trinidad and Tobago brings that responsibility close to home. UNHCR's factsheet for October–December 2025 reported 26,509 refugees and asylum-seekers under its protection in the country, 85 per cent of them Venezuelan. These are figures for UNHCR's protected population, not a census of every Venezuelan resident. The factsheet also noted that Trinidad and Tobago had signed the Refugee Convention and its Protocol but had not incorporated their principles into national legislation or developed its asylum system. International recognition and domestic immigration permission therefore cannot simply be assumed to mean the same thing. [16]

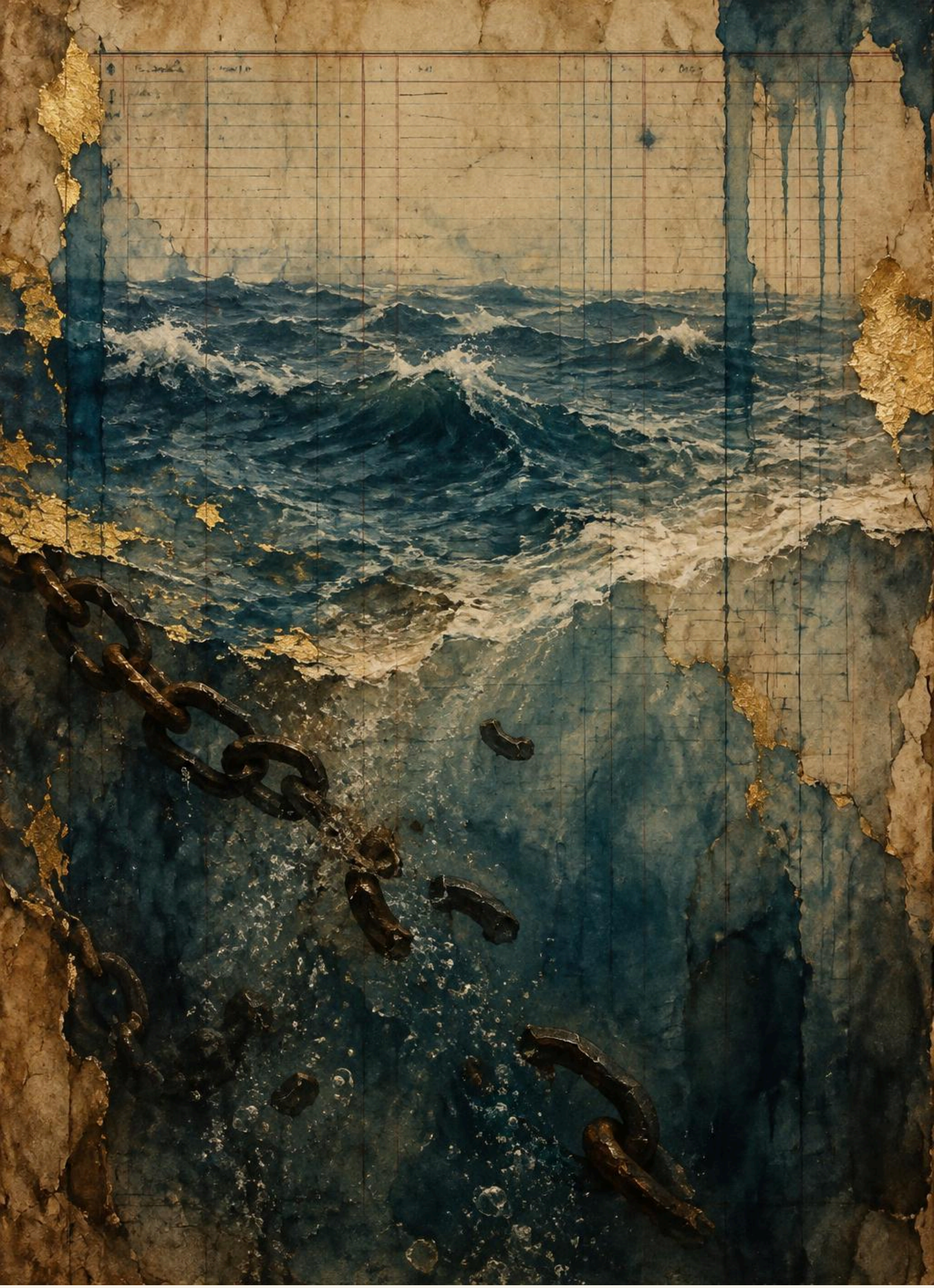
The factsheet recorded a government announcement on 29 December expanding the Migrant Registration Framework beyond the Venezuelans covered by the earlier exercise to all people in an irregular situation. It described temporary permission under the arrangements then announced. UNHCR's subsequent guidance on the 2026 framework said approved applicants would receive authorisation to live and work until 31 December 2026, and warned that people who did not register within the specified window could face deportation. The later guidance is important: the dates attached to an early announcement should not silently override a subsequent account. [16, 17]

"On 15 SEPTEMBER 2026, the TRINIDAD EXPRESS reported that some VENEZUELAN migrants and local groups were still awaiting an update more than six months into the process."

Registration offers a route out of some insecurity, but an announcement is not proof that every applicant has received a decision. On 15 September 2026, the Trinidad Express reported that some Venezuelan migrants and local groups were still awaiting an update more than six months into the process. The distinction between submitting details and receiving usable documentation matters to the person trying to establish permission to work. Meanwhile, UNHCR's end-2025 factsheet said funding constraints had led it to close its in-country presence on 31 December, shifting oversight to Panama and assistance to partner organisations. [18, 16]

Here the region's competing positions meet. Caribbean governments can challenge abrupt withdrawals of security overseas while recognising that their own administrative choices shape migrants' lives at home. That need not mean accepting unlimited obligations or denying the right to control entry. It means making commitments legible and implementation accountable. The new politics of migration reaches far beyond the point of arrival: into employment permission, settlement clocks and the cost of sending money. The Caribbean's most persuasive response would defend the same proposition in each setting — that a person's future should not depend on an unexplained change of administrative weather.

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THE LEDGER AND THE OCEAN *on page 114*

Opening artwork for "Who DECIDES *What* REPAIR MEANS?".

ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR PEARCEROBINSON.COM

WHO DECIDES WHAT REPAIR MEANS?

Britain has agreed to structured dialogue over slavery's historical harms, while CARICOM *has sharpened its programme for reparatory justice. The next struggle is over who sets the terms—and whether acknowledgment can become an obligation.*

By PEARCE ROBINSON · *Analysis*

THE DOOR IN ANTIGUA

The consequential words from Antigua were procedural. In the communiqué of the November 2026 Commonwealth summit, leaders welcomed Britain's agreement to a "structured, time-bound, inclusive and good-faith dialogue" with affected parties over the trafficking of enslaved Africans and its historical harms. There was no agreed compensation figure in that passage, no settlement mechanism, no British acceptance of a debt. Yet the language placed a named government inside a process that Caribbean campaigners had spent years demanding it enter. For a movement accustomed to being told that its subject belonged elsewhere, securing a place at the table was a material diplomatic achievement. [1]

It was also an achievement vulnerable to exaggeration. Reporting from the summit, the Guardian described a British prime minister, Andy Burnham, willing to discuss an apology but ruling out reparations. Antigua and Barbuda's prime minister, Gaston Browne, said the Caribbean position remained that reparations must form part of the dialogue. He hoped talks would occur within twelve months, with their framework established by the end of 2026 or early the following year. Those were expectations reported from the host government, not evidence that the parties had agreed the substance of repair. [2]

The difference between agreeing to talk and agreeing what the talks concern now defines the movement's predicament. Britain can understand engagement as a way to acknowledge history while preserving its refusal of financial liability. Caribbean governments can understand the same engagement as the beginning of negotiations over obligations Britain has yet to recognise. A common vocabulary can conceal incompatible purposes. The challenge is to expose that incompatibility without making continued discussion impossible. [1, 2]

Read together, the summit text and the Caribbean response suggest that the decisive issue is authority: who defines the harm, chooses the remedy and judges whether it has been delivered? A scholarship can be generosity, an investment in influence or one component of reparatory justice. Its institutional design and the obligations attached to it determine which. The Caribbean's strongest argument is therefore larger than a demand for money, though money remains within it: the recipients must cease to be merely recipients. They must become parties to an accountable settlement. [1, 2]

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A PLAN, NOT A PRICE

The architecture predates this summit. Caribbean heads established the CARICOM Reparations Commission in 2013 to prepare a case concerning Indigenous and African-descended communities. Its original Ten Point Plan identifies European governments as central actors because they provided the legal and fiscal structures of enslavement and benefited from the system. These are the commission's grounds for seeking redress, not a judicial determination of contemporary liability. The distinction matters: the plan is both an indictment of a historical order and a programme through which governments propose to negotiate its consequences. [3]

The original demands are deliberately broader than an invoice. Alongside a full formal apology sit repatriation for those who wish it and an Indigenous peoples development programme. Cultural institutions and the repair of cultural connections address the disruption of memory and belonging. Public health, literacy and psychological rehabilitation occupy the same framework as technology transfer and debt cancellation. Taken together, the ten points connect recognition to the practical capacities of a society: to educate, care, innovate and decide its own future. Treating that programme as a proposal simply to distribute cheques misstates its published scope. [3]

Nor should an account written in November 2026 present the original list as though it were unchanged. In July, CARICOM announced that heads of government had approved a revised Ten Point Plan, subtitled A Manifesto for the Coming Enlightenment. Its contents give explicit prominence to gender-based violence and assaults on the family, cultural restitution, sovereignty and development, and monetary compensation alongside debt cancellation. The continued ten-point format masks an important sharpening of the argument: repair concerns the organisation of social life as well as the allocation of financial resources. [4]

September's regional conference in Barbados supplied a further measure of institutional consolidation. CARICOM secretary-general Carla Barnett reported that twelve member states now had national commissions or committees and presented the revised framework as a response to historical wrongs and their contemporary consequences. That infrastructure creates possibilities beyond summit advocacy. It can gather evidence and connect regional diplomacy to national constituencies. But committees are not themselves remedies. Their value ultimately depends on whether communities can use them to influence priorities, examine proposed agreements and challenge claims that justice has already been done. [5]

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FROM SAMOA TO SOLIDARITY

Samoa supplied the earlier opening. In October 2024, Commonwealth leaders acknowledged calls for discussion of reparatory justice and agreed that the time had come for a "meaningful, truthful and respectful conversation" towards a common future based on equity. The communiqué's wording survived British resistance to placing reparations on the summit agenda. Keir Starmer, then prime minister, nevertheless maintained that the discussions had not been about money. The result was a carefully bounded success: the subject entered the collective record without Britain accepting the financial implications campaigners wanted examined. [6]

Antigua's significance becomes clearer against that baseline. The 2026 communiqué recalls Samoa, recognises subsequent African Union and CARICOM initiatives and welcomes a specifically British commitment to structured dialogue. That is a progression from a general statement that conversation is timely to an undertaking identifying a participant and characteristics of the process. It is not equivalent to an enforceable schedule. The reparatory-justice passage does not specify who selects the affected parties, how disagreements are resolved or what follows if the talks produce no agreement. [1]

"The result was a carefully bounded success: the subject entered the collective record without BRITAIN *accepting the financial implications campaigners wanted examined."*

The African Union's choice of "Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations" as its 2025 theme enlarged the diplomatic setting. Its official account connects the initiative to enslavement, colonialism, apartheid and genocide, and traces an institutional lineage through the 1993 Abuja reparations conference and the 2001 Durban process. Reparations did not suddenly become an African concern because a contemporary summit discovered it. The theme made an existing history of advocacy more visible and offered a framework for co-ordination between continental and diaspora demands. [7]

There is strategic weight in that connection, but no reason to assume identical interests. The AU's stated remit extends across historical experiences and potential remedies much wider than any single Caribbean claim. A useful coalition must be able to accommodate specificity rather than dissolve it into ceremonial unity. The lesson of the Commonwealth texts is that persistent co-ordination can alter diplomatic language. The next test is whether an Africa–Caribbean partnership can help shape the machinery behind the words, while leaving affected societies room to identify their own harms and negotiate their own priorities. [1, 7]

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THE WORLD'S HEARING ROOM

On 25 March 2026, the movement secured a striking international declaration. A Ghana-led General Assembly resolution described the trafficking of enslaved Africans and their racialised chattel enslavement as the gravest crime against humanity. UN News reported 123 votes in favour, three against and 52 abstentions. The text urged engagement with reparatory justice, including dialogue about historical wrongs. Its force was political and normative; the vote was not a court judgment awarding damages to Caribbean states. Presenting it as an already executable compensation order would weaken an otherwise substantial advance. [8]

The resolution matters because arguments over reparations are also arguments over what the international system is prepared to name. Language that recognises both the magnitude of enslavement and its enduring consequences makes it harder to confine the subject to commemorative observance. But recognition does not settle causation in an individual claim, establish a valuation method or determine which institution should administer a remedy. Those questions remain necessary work. Political declarations can strengthen the environment in which that work takes place without substituting for it. [8]

The UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent offers a different kind of international space. At its fifth session in Geneva in April 2026, High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk described reparatory justice as "key to dismantling systemic racism". He connected present discrimination in employment, hospitals, education and policing to the legacies of colonialism and enslavement, while warning that digital technologies could reproduce existing biases. This was a human-rights diagnosis of contemporary conditions, rather than an exercise confined to historic remembrance. [9]

The distinction between a forum, a negotiating conference and a court should remain clear. Türk's intervention supplies an argument about the relationship between historic violence and current institutions; it does not decide a lawsuit. Its importance for Caribbean policy lies in the questions it makes unavoidable. If repair is intended to confront contemporary disadvantage, an agreement needs a way to identify that disadvantage and measure change. A memorial can honour the dead. A health programme can improve living conditions. Neither should be asked to stand, without explanation, for the whole work of justice. [9]

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SORROW AND THE STATE

The monarchy's language illustrates the distance between acknowledgment and an undertaking to repair. At the Commonwealth opening in Antigua on 3 November, Charles III said that the trade in enslaved persons still cast a shadow over member countries. He called it a "shameful chapter of history" that filled his heart with horror and his soul with "the most profound personal sorrow". The published speech also pledged modern partnership to address past wrongs with future action. It contained no formal apology and no undertaking to pay reparations. [10]

That absence was explicit in the BBC's reporting, which distinguished the King's contrition from an apology and contrasted his speech with Burnham's willingness to consider one. The broadcaster also reported the prime minister's continued rejection of financial reparations. Monarchical sorrow, an executive negotiating position and a Commonwealth agreement are separate things. Collapsing them into a single British response obscures where decisions would have to be made and which institution could be held to them. A royal speech can change the atmosphere without changing the government's financial commitments. [11]

"A discretionary programme, alterable by a future government, offers a different relationship from an acknowledged remedy negotiated with those entitled to receive it."

The original CARICOM framework makes precisely that distinction between regret and responsibility. Its first point insists on a full formal apology and rejects statements of regret as inadequate acknowledgment. That is the commission's standard, not proof that every proposed apology would satisfy affected communities. An apology's wording would matter: what acts it identifies, whose conduct it acknowledges and whether it is joined to obligations. Expressions of pain centred on the speaker cannot alone answer a demand centred on the people harmed and the institutions that benefited. [3]

The November negotiating positions therefore leave a large unresolved question. Can Britain offer programmes in areas also covered by CARICOM's plan while refusing to describe them as reparations? The Guardian reported Burnham's proposals for debt discussions and £40 million in Caribbean infrastructure funding over three years, alongside criticism from reparations advocates that development assistance cannot replace repair. Useful expenditure need not be dismissed. Yet its usefulness cannot settle its status. A discretionary programme, alterable by a future government, offers a different relationship from an acknowledged remedy negotiated with those entitled to receive it. [2]

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THE INTIMATE LEDGER

Families have sometimes crossed thresholds governments still approach cautiously. On 27 February 2023, members of the Trevelyan family delivered a public apology in Grenada at a forum co-hosted by the national reparations committee and The University of the West Indies. UWI's account records an initial £100,000 and an apology signed by 104 descendants of the part-owners of six plantations. The university presented the event as an application of the Caribbean reparatory framework, linking an acknowledgment of enslavement to a material contribution rather than treating an expression of remorse as sufficient. [12]

In Guyana in August 2023, descendants of the plantation owner John Gladstone also apologised for their ancestor's role in enslavement. Associated Press reported the apology as Caribbean governments pursued reparations. Such acts do not make descendants personally culpable for ancestral conduct. Their significance is that living people can acknowledge the history attached to a family name without waiting for a court to compel them. They also demonstrate the limits of private initiative: a family cannot negotiate on behalf of the British state or discharge obligations claimed against it. [13]

Universities present another model, with more durable institutional partners and their own questions about accounting. In August 2019, Glasgow and UWI sealed an agreement establishing the Glasgow-Caribbean Centre for Development Research. Glasgow committed to raising and spending £20 million over twenty years. Crucially, its announcement said most of the funding was expected to come from research grants and benefactions and that the centre was expected to become self-supporting. This was not a statement that £20 million had already been transferred, nor that the entire sum would come from Glasgow's existing resources. [14]

That qualification should sharpen, rather than foreclose, assessment. Research partnerships can support Caribbean priorities and create capacity that outlasts an apology ceremony. But a headline valuation is not the same as delivered repair. The appropriate questions concern additional resources, decision-making authority and demonstrable benefit: what would otherwise not have happened, who determines the work, and what reaches the communities invoked in its justification? The family and university initiatives establish that action need not await a comprehensive interstate settlement. They cannot establish that such a settlement has become unnecessary. [12, 14]

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THE CROWN'S PARADOX

Constitutional sovereignty runs beside the reparations campaign without following an identical timetable. Barbados became a republic in late 2021; Jamaica's effort remained contested in 2026. Caribbean Life reported in August that disagreement over the final appellate court continued to obstruct a settlement between Jamaica's governing and opposition parties. The opposition wanted the move to a republic linked to replacing the London-based Privy Council with the Caribbean Court of Justice; the government resisted that linkage. Removing the monarch and deciding where final judicial authority should sit are connected questions, but politically separable ones. [15]

Republican status cannot itself deliver compensation or erase the economic structures identified in CARICOM's programme. Nor does retaining the Crown demonstrate consent to those structures. Barbados's constitutional transition and Jamaica's unfinished debate should therefore resist a simple ranking of decolonisation. A local head of state changes a fundamental representation of authority. The distribution of resources, access to justice and terms of international economic engagement require further decisions. Treating a presidency as either a complete remedy or an empty symbol asks constitutional reform to do the wrong kind of work. [3, 15]

> *"The opposition wanted the move to a republic linked to replacing the* LONDON-BASED PRIVY COUNCIL *with the* CARIBBEAN COURT *of* JUSTICE; *the government resisted that linkage."*

Jamaica's 2026 legal initiative makes the relationship especially arresting. According to the Jamaica Information Service, the government filed a petition to the King on 7 September asking him to refer three questions to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. They concern whether the seizure, transportation and chattel enslavement of Africans were lawful under English law, whether enslavement in Jamaica breached international law, and whether Britain owes a reparatory remedy. Culture minister Olivia Grange stressed that the petition included no monetary claim. These are questions submitted for determination, not findings already obtained. [16]

An October government update reported that the petition had been referred and that a preliminary hearing was set for the week of 8 March 2027. It also said the UK government's case was due on 20 November 2026, after this issue's reporting cut-off. Neither a substantive ruling nor the outcome of that future hearing can be claimed here. The institutional paradox remains powerful: a state debating departure from the monarchy is using a royal referral and its existing appellate machinery to pursue questions about Britain's responsibility for enslavement. Constitutional inheritance can furnish a route of challenge as well as an object of it. [17]

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AFTER THE PHOTOGRAPH

The caution from Antigua's own campaigners is the appropriate closing note for the summit. On 10 November, the Antigua and Barbuda Reparations Support Commission welcomed the diplomatic progress but warned that it had not secured a formal apology or tangible reparations. "Dialogue is not an apology, and an apology, while important, is not reparations," it said. That formulation refuses two temptations at once: declaring victory because the vocabulary has improved, and dismissing the opening because the desired settlement has not yet arrived. [18]

A serious process should now make its structure visible. The Commonwealth commitment supplies grounds for asking who will participate and when the parties will meet. The revised CARICOM plan supplies a published agenda against which proposals can be examined. Transparent terms of reference would allow citizens to distinguish progress from diplomatic repetition. They would also make clear whether financial compensation is being discussed, excluded or simply renamed. Without that clarity, the word dialogue can become an indefinitely renewable substitute for a decision. [1, 4]

The same discipline should apply to Caribbean governments. An international demand made in the name of harmed communities requires a domestic account of who speaks for them and how benefits would be governed. Independent scrutiny, accessible reporting and meaningful participation are sensible safeguards for any prospective arrangement, not evidence of wrongdoing by existing campaigners. They follow from the movement's own central argument about agency. If repair is intended to restore the capacity to decide, its administration should not reproduce a relationship in which decisions arrive from elsewhere. [2]

By 14 November 2026, the verified record contains diplomatic commitments and a Jamaican legal process awaiting its next stages, rather than a completed settlement. The opening is nonetheless consequential. CARICOM has an updated programme; the Commonwealth has recorded Britain's participation in structured dialogue; Jamaica has pushed specific legal questions into an institutional channel. The task is now to connect those tracks without confusing their authority. What would make this a turning point is not another declaration that history matters, but an agreement through which the people living with its consequences acquire enforceable influence over what happens next. [1, 4, 17]

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THE REVEREND DR TESSA HENRY-ROBINSON *on page 123*

The REVEREND DR TESSA HENRY-ROBINSON.

PHOTOGRAPH SUPPLIED BY PEARCE ROBINSON · PHOTOGRAPHER NOT IDENTIFIED

THE REVEREND DR TESSA HENRY-ROBINSON

The authority to repair

A TRINBAGONIAN *theologian made history at the head of the* UNITED REFORMED CHURCH'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *then carried its slavery apology to* JAMAICA. *Her work asks what must change when repentance moves beyond words.*

By PEARCE ROBINSON · *Profile*

THE AUTHORITY TO APOLOGISE

When the Reverend Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson delivered the United Reformed Church's apology for its forebears' involvement in transatlantic slavery in Jamaica, she occupied a position that conventional accounts of British power struggle to accommodate. A Trinbagonian woman, herself a descendant of the enslaved, was speaking with the authority of a British Christian institution implicated in that history. She was neither an outside petitioner nor a ceremonial witness. She was its elected General Assembly Moderator, the person entitled to speak on its behalf. [1]

That distinction became public argument. In a letter published by the Guardian on 11 June 2024, Dr Henry-Robinson challenged criticism of a Black woman delivering the apology to Black Jamaicans. "As the elected moderator, it was my duty and right to deliver this apology," she wrote. To suggest that a white person would have been more suitable, she argued, reproduced a "white saviour" narrative. The intervention asserted something larger than personal standing: institutional responsibility does not belong permanently to white people, even when the responsibility concerns white domination. [1]

The apology was delivered during the URC's April 2024 pilgrimage. At Webster Memorial Church in St Andrew, near Kingston, the statement was received by Jamaica's culture minister, Olivia Grange, and the Reverend Gary Harriott, Moderator of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. The Caribbean was the setting for an institutional encounter, with identifiable participants and obligations, rather than a convenient backdrop for British remorse. [2]

Minister Grange, who holds responsibility for reparations in the Jamaican government, accepted the apology in the "spirit of repair, restoration and reconciliation, as demanded by God our Creator." She then turned the moment outward, urging the churches that had sent representatives to witness it to "signal to your government that the Christian thing to do is to admit culpability by way of an apology and to engage with us to determine the various forms that reparations may take". "It is not enough that the enslavers and their descendants should regret the suffering that slavery inflicted on our ancestors," she said. "When you have done something wrong, you must take responsibility for it, apologise and try to set things right." Dr Henry-Robinson, for her part, committed the church "to find constructive ways in which we can move from saying I'm sorry into concrete actions of repairing justice." [18, 19]

For readers in Trinidad and Tobago, this is the necessary introduction to a figure whose significance extends beyond an ecclesiastical first. Dr Henry-Robinson has brought Caribbean historical consciousness into British church leadership, while insisting on the full authority of the office she earned. Her profile belongs beside the reparations debate because her work exposes one of its hardest questions: how can an institution acknowledge its inheritance of harm and then change the relationships through which that inheritance continues? Her published record makes that question practical, theological and personal. [1, 2]

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THE APOLOGY IN JAMAICA

The HON. OLIVIA GRANGE, JAMAICA'S MINISTER *of* CULTURE, GENDER, ENTERTAINMENT *and* SPORT, *receives the* UNITED REFORMED CHURCH'S *apology for its role in transatlantic slavery,* WEBSTER MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH, ST ANDREW, APRIL *2024.*

PHOTOGRAPH: UNITED REFORMED CHURCH · PHOTOGRAPH RECORD

AN ISLAND EDUCATION

Her account of childhood begins with a familiarity that Caribbean readers will recognise: religious difference within one family. Her father was born in Tobago and raised Methodist; her mother was born in Trinidad and grew up in Roman Catholic and Pentecostal surroundings. Dr Henry-Robinson was baptised Methodist, attended Roman Catholic and Anglican schools, and encountered Pentecostal worship during holidays with her maternal grandparents. Recalling those experiences for Churches Together in England in 2025, she described difference as something she had learnt to honour rather than fear. [3]

Her maternal grandmother was Jewish. In her 2023 interview with Reform, Dr Henry-Robinson remembered listening as her grandmother read the Bible and explored Christianity: "She was very keen to read it, because she was Jewish and so coming into Christianity was fresh and new to her." Jewish, Catholic and Methodist traditions met within her childhood, giving her early experience of listening across religious difference. Her subsequent commitment to dialogue had roots close to home. [4]

Before ordained ministry came teaching. The URC records a career beginning in Trinidad and Tobago in the 1990s and continuing in Brazil and Britain, across primary, secondary and further education. In Reform, Dr Henry-Robinson recalled teaching English in Brazil and moving with her family to Britain in 1999. Her description of the move preserved an important ambiguity: Trinidad and Tobago had been home, while Britain could be home without always feeling like a place where she had been invited to belong. That tension is present in her later scholarship on inclusion. [4, 5]

She joined the URC in 2001 and was ordained in 2018. Her early formal ecumenical work, she told CTE, involved building relationships among five local churches while worshipping at Christ Church Bellingham in the early 2000s. By her General Assembly induction she had responsibility for four East London congregations. These details place the public theologian within the routines of congregational life: teaching, listening and negotiating difference over time. Her authority was built in communities before it became visible on a national platform. [3, 5]

MAKING ROOM AT THE TABLE

In 2011, years before her ordination, Dr Henry-Robinson became a founding member of Cascades of Grace, established through the URC's Global and Intercultural Ministries to connect and empower Black, Asian and minority ethnic women. The denomination's biography stresses the purpose of making women present and audible. Those are different achievements. A church can count someone among its members while leaving her experience outside the conversations that establish priorities, recognise gifts or decide whose understanding of Christianity carries weight. [5]

Cascades of Grace also became scholarship. In 2017, Karen Campbell and Dr Henry-Robinson published an article of that name in Feminist Theology, volume 26, pages 47–58. Its abstract describes two founding members recounting the network's formation, their experience of churches and the process of candidating for ministry. The movement between collective support and published reflection matters: experiences liable to be treated as isolated difficulties were brought into a form that could be examined, discussed and used to question institutional practice. [6]

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FROM THE LECTERN

The REVEREND DR TESSA HENRY-ROBINSON *speaks during a church service in* JAMAICA.

IMAGE SUPPLIED BY PEARCE ROBINSON · PHOTOGRAPHER NOT IDENTIFIED

Her doctoral thesis carries that concern into its title: Renegotiating space around the multicultural United Reformed Church table: towards the intentional intercultural inclusion of ethnically-minoritised women. Anglia Ruskin Research Online records it as a thesis published in its repository in August 2023; the document identifies a Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology, with the research programme carried out through the Cambridge Theological Federation. Repository publication should not be confused with the date of the award. The study's central question is who can participate fully around a table already described as multicultural. [7]

The research used observation in two URC congregations and questionnaire-interviews with twelve Black or ethnically minoritised women. Its abstract identifies fears of being ignored, desires to participate authentically and a need to be recognised as fully human. Dr Henry-Robinson develops a womanist embodiment theology and the category "insiders-without". The phrase catches the distance between formal membership and effective belonging. This is a small qualitative study, not a statistical portrait of every congregation; its force lies in attending closely to experiences that a reassuring account of diversity might otherwise overlook. [7]

A FIRST WITH A PURPOSE

At the URC General Assembly held in Swanwick, Derbyshire, from 30 June to 3 July 2023, Dr Henry-Robinson was inducted as the first Black and ethnically minoritised woman to serve as General Assembly Moderator. The distinction should be stated precisely. It concerns this denomination and this office, not a claim that no Black woman had previously led a British church. Its importance is substantial without embellishment: a woman whose work examined exclusion now held a central representative role in the institution she had been examining. [5]

Her language at the induction did not treat arrival as completion. She pledged to listen and turn that listening into action, and described a denomination continually seeking justice. In her introduction to the moderatorial year, she set the task within the URC's aspiration to become a multicultural church with an intercultural habit and its commitment to becoming anti-racist. The distinction is demanding. A multicultural membership describes who is present; an intercultural habit requires those present to affect one another and the institution's ordinary ways of working. [5, 8]

She calls herself a womanist practical theologian. Explaining the term to CTE, she located her reading of scripture and society among people pushed to the margins, with race, gender, history and faith shaping interpretation. Practical theology, in this account, brings belief into conversation with lived experience rather than reserving theological authority for abstraction. Her role as Associate Tutor in Womanist Practical Theology at Westminster College, confirmed by CTE and the Free Churches Group, gives that approach an educational setting as well as a congregational one. [3, 9]

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A WIDER PUBLIC VOICE

HELEN CAMERON *presents the* REVEREND DR TESSA HENRY-ROBINSON *with the* FREE CHURCHES GROUP *medal of office at the* AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL CHURCH, LONDON, *13* APRIL *2025.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDY JACKSON/URC · PHOTOGRAPH RECORD

The wider argument emerges in accessible writing too. Reform's June 2025 extract, "Together in the way of the cross", adapted from her Free Churches inaugural sermon, presents independence from state control as a freedom carrying responsibilities of conscience and generosity. She also criticises the restrictions churches place on their generosity towards one another. Read alongside the thesis, the essay suggests a consistent standard: institutions should be assessed by the life their arrangements permit. Holding office gives her another place from which to press that question; it does not make the question disappear. [10]

THE MISSIONARY INHERITANCE

The Council for World Mission provides an international setting for this work. Both the URC and CWM's account of her 2023 induction identify Dr Henry-Robinson's service on a think tank helping to form CWM's Legacies of Slavery work. This is a specific contribution to the intellectual formation of a programme. It should not be inflated into a claim that she chairs that programme or holds a CWM executive office. Her documented involvement is significant because it places her within an institutional examination of how Christian mission itself helped reproduce racial power. [5, 11]

CWM's Bethelsdorp Statement traces its roots to the London Missionary Society, founded in 1795, and describes CWM's emergence in 1977 as a decolonising turn towards equal partnership. Yet the statement refuses to make reorganisation a certificate of innocence. It acknowledges that the missionary endeavour employed false theologies of race and civilisation, and that its archive reveals white supremacy and hostility towards people of African descent within LMS work. This is the institution's own judgement of its inheritance, rather than a charge imported by an unsympathetic observer. [12]

The Legacies of Slavery Core Group Report of 2018 records a process of hearings and reflection on histories of suffering and their continuing consequences. In its foreword, CWM's general secretary commends the courage of participants who spoke about pain, dislocation, struggle and hope, and presents restorative justice as a concrete sign of repentance. That approach shifts the archive's function. Records of mission become evidence to be interrogated alongside the testimony of communities living with its consequences, rather than simply material through which an organisation celebrates its founders. [13]

At Bethelsdorp on 23 August 2022, the Act of Repentance and launch of the Onesimus Project gave this reckoning a programme through which to proceed. A CWM guide announced in October 2023 identifies three funds: Reparatory Justice, Healing of Memories and Modern Day Slavery. Member churches submit proposals for board approval under published guidelines. The distinction between funds recognises that remembrance, restitution and present exploitation require related but different responses. Dr Henry-Robinson's contribution belongs within this collective architecture; the archive does not warrant assigning its entire construction to her. [12, 14]

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AMONG THE PRESIDENTS

CTE PRESIDENTS *at the installation of* ARCHBISHOP RICHARD MOTH, FEBRUARY *2026. From left:* BISHOP HOVAKIM MANUKYAN, *the* REVEREND DR TESSA HENRY-ROBINSON, ARCHBISHOP SARAH MULLALLY.

PHOTOGRAPH: © MAZUR/CBCEW.ORG.UK · PHOTOGRAPH RECORD

BEYOND THE SPOKEN WORD

The URC's own process similarly separates confession from the work that should follow. Its 2022 General Assembly adopted an apology acknowledging the role of its forebears in transatlantic slavery and the failure to dismantle continuing legacies. A second resolution committed the denomination to practical action and required concrete, costed proposals. In 2023 it adopted a local, regional and global approach: change within the Church, work in Britain and cooperation with partners in Africa and the Caribbean, potentially through CWM. These commitments preceded the Jamaica pilgrimage. [2]

At Webster Memorial, the apology was accompanied by a pledge from the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands to give vulnerable people parcels of land it had received from those who profited from slavery. The distinction between institutions is essential: this was the Jamaican partner church's pledge, not a documented URC land transfer. Nor does a reported pledge establish that every transfer has been completed. Nevertheless, it brought property into the same conversation as repentance, making visible what is at stake when inherited resources become part of an institution's moral reckoning. [2]

Dr Henry-Robinson's sermon at Hope United Church during the pilgrimage offers a published theological account of that movement. Reading the Good Shepherd and Psalm 23, she resisted a merely comforting interpretation. The history of enslavement had left social, psychological and structural wounds, she argued; faith required confronting them and imagining their repair. "This is a starting point for bold action," she told the congregation. The sermon's border-crossing movement is interpretive as well as geographical: familiar biblical language becomes a demand to enter difficult history rather than retreat into spiritual reassurance. [15]

That is a useful way to understand reparatory justice as embodied repentance, provided the interpretation remains tethered to the record. An apology names responsibility; remembrance protects the truth from erasure; material repair changes conditions produced or sustained by harm. None automatically supplies the others. The URC's public account says global work should support priorities identified by partners themselves, rather than presume British knowledge of what they need. This offers a criterion for judging the process: who defines repair, who controls resources, and what evidence shows that commitments have become changes in people's lives? [2, 15]

A WIDER PUBLIC VOICE

On 13 April 2025, at the American International Church on Tottenham Court Road in London, Dr Henry-Robinson was inducted as the 62nd Moderator of the Free Churches Group. Helen Cameron presented the medal of office and a specially commissioned preaching stole. CTE's contemporary report states that, on entering the role, she also became its President representing the Free Churches. Its subsequent interview identifies her presidential term as 2025–28. These are related offices across different bodies, extending her responsibilities beyond the denomination whose Assembly she had moderated. [16, 3]

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Those responsibilities now place her at the centre of national Christian ceremony. At the installation of Richard Moth as Archbishop of Westminster in February 2026, she stood beside Bishop Hovakim Manukyan of the Orthodox Churches as Sarah Mullally brought an ecumenical greeting; a month later, at Canterbury Cathedral, she was among the CTE Presidents who invited the new Archbishop of Canterbury to sign the Presidents' Covenant. [20]

The broader platform is not simply another entry in a biography. In her CTE interview, she identified mistrust and unspoken fears as obstacles to ecumenism, and called for cooperation to be practised rather than performed. The claim follows directly from her earlier work: inclusion can become an institutional description that conceals unchanged relationships. Her public responsibilities now require the patient negotiation of those relationships among churches with different histories and forms of authority, without asking them to surrender every difference in order to act together. [3]

Her interfaith responsibilities widen that circle further. The Council of Christians and Jews' Common Ground, reviewing 2025, explicitly welcomes Dr Henry-Robinson among its Presidents in her capacity as Free Churches Moderator. This is a shared presidency, not the sole leadership of the organisation. Alongside her published recollection of a Jewish maternal grandmother, the appointment gives a particular resonance to the distance travelled from childhood encounters with different traditions to formal responsibility for dialogue. That resonance should not be mistaken for a claim that family background alone qualifies someone for the work. [17, 4]

"*She joined representatives of the* BAPTIST UNION *of* GREAT BRITAIN, *the* METHODIST CHURCH *in* BRITAIN, CHURCHES TOGETHER *in* ENGLAND *and* CHURCHES TOGETHER *in* BRITAIN *and* IRELAND."

Across these roles, the recurring demand is that people meet one another without allowing apparent unity to suppress difficult truths. The Jamaica argument showed why that matters. Dr Henry-Robinson could represent a British church while speaking as a Caribbean descendant of the enslaved; neither position cancelled the other. Her presence made the institution's history more complicated to narrate, but potentially more honestly so. The widening of her public voice therefore matters beyond representation: it creates opportunities for perspectives once treated as peripheral to shape what institutions actually say and undertake. [1, 16]

AT THE DOOR OF GOVERNMENT

Her public witness had already reached Downing Street before she became General Assembly Moderator. In an account published on 6 April 2023, the Council for World Mission recorded that Dr Henry-Robinson, then Moderator-Elect, helped deliver a joint statement opposing the UK government's Illegal Migration Bill to Number 10. She joined representatives of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church in Britain, Churches Together in England and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. More than 1,450 church leaders had signed the appeal, asking the government to withdraw the legislation and establish "safe and accessible routes to enable the UK to play its part in welcoming people in need of safety". [21]

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THE MINISTERIAL ENGAGEMENT

JAMES CLEVERLY, HOME SECRETARY *at the time of the churches'* FEBRUARY *2024 meeting.*
OFFICIAL *portrait taken on 13* NOVEMBER *2023; not a photograph of that meeting.*

LAUREN HURLEY / NO 10 DOWNING STREET · OPEN GOVERNMENT LICENCE V3.0 · RESIZED, UNCROPPED · PHOTOGRAPH RECORD · REUSE LICENCE



CHURCH AND STATE

The HOME OFFICE *headquarters, 2* MARSHAM STREET, LONDON. CONTEXTUAL *architectural photograph; the joint statement does not specify the meeting's venue.*

STEPH GRAY · CC BY-SA 2.0 · RESIZED, UNCROPPED · PHOTOGRAPH RECORD · REUSE LICENCE

"It is essential to remember that our nation's greatness lies not in turning our backs on those in need, but in embracing our shared humanity and committing to care for all," she said. Her accompanying appeal drew on a duty she recognised across the world's religions: care for neighbours, visitors, strangers and people seeking help across borders. The intervention brought her theology into a dispute over the exercise of state power, insisting that the treatment of people seeking sanctuary was a question of public responsibility. [21]

A separate ministerial engagement followed in February 2024, when representatives of Britain's Christian churches met the then Home Secretary, James Cleverly, over allegations that churches and clergy were deliberately facilitating false asylum claims. A joint statement published by the URC on 23 April records that the meeting took place at Anglican leaders' request. According to the church leaders, when challenged, "neither he nor officials could provide evidence to support the allegations of widespread abuse". They reported that follow-up meetings had been agreed to promote closer cooperation between the churches and the Home Office. [22]

Dr Henry-Robinson signed that statement as Moderator of the URC General Assembly, alongside the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and other senior Christian leaders. The published account establishes her participation in this collective intervention, but does not name everyone who attended the February meeting; her personal attendance remains independently unconfirmed. Her signature nevertheless placed the URC's elected representative within a national church leadership defending its work with refugees and negotiating an ongoing relationship with the department responsible for asylum policy. "We have pledged to continue to work with the Home Office, and we do so in good faith," the signatories wrote. [22]

For a theologian whose own life has crossed Trinidad and Tobago, Brazil and Britain, the encounter gives her work on belonging a wider political setting. Her research examines the barriers that leave women formally inside a church but unable to participate fully; her migration intervention asks a government to recognise obligations to people arriving at its borders. Alongside the later Jamaica pilgrimage, it reveals a public ministry concerned with both inherited injustice and present decisions about whose lives institutions are prepared to protect. [4, 7, 21]

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AT THE DOOR OF GOVERNMENT

DR TESSA HENRY-ROBINSON *with fellow church representatives outside 10* DOWNING STREET. CWM'S APRIL *2023 report records the delivery of their joint appeal opposing the* ILLEGAL MIGRATION BILL.

PHOTOGRAPH SUPPLIED BY PEARCE ROBINSON · PHOTOGRAPHER NOT IDENTIFIED · PHOTOGRAPH RECORD

WHAT REPAIR WILL REQUIRE

For Trinidad and Tobago, the achievement deserves recognition on its own terms. Dr Henry-Robinson's career links a Caribbean educational and religious formation with congregational ministry in Britain, scholarship on marginalised women and national Christian leadership. The first Black and ethnically minoritised woman to moderate the URC General Assembly has gone on to represent Free Churches in wider ecumenical and interfaith bodies. None of these facts needs a claim of universal celebrity to make it consequential. They locate a Trinbagonian voice within institutions through which Britain argues about conscience and public responsibility. [3, 5, 17]

There is also a reason to resist turning her into an uncomplicated institutional success story. Her scholarship describes women who belong yet remain unheard; her moderatorial statement asks a denomination to change; her Jamaica sermon makes reconciliation an active undertaking. Those interventions lose their force if the celebration of an exceptional appointment becomes evidence that the underlying work is finished. The more exact tribute is to take her questions seriously, including when they unsettle the organisations that now honour her and the readers who welcome her advancement. [7, 8, 15]

The reparations thread provides the clearest test. Published apologies, partner-led priorities, training commitments and funds with application procedures are different forms of action, with different standards of accountability. A serious assessment must distinguish money promised from money disbursed, land pledged from land transferred, access offered from authority shared. This is an analytical standard rather than a verdict that every programme has met it. It follows from the institutions' own movement towards practical and costed repair, and from Dr Henry-Robinson's insistence that Christian faith be lived through action in wounded communities. [2, 14, 15]

Her importance lies at that demanding threshold. In Jamaica she defended the right to carry institutional responsibility without setting aside Caribbean identity. In her research she asked whose experience the Church allows to count. In wider Christian leadership she has argued that generosity and cooperation must become habits rather than declarations. Together, these commitments suggest a serious measure of historical change: not only that a door has opened for one distinguished woman, but that her passage through it helps alter the terms on which others can enter, speak and help decide what repair should mean. [1, 7, 10]

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THE BUSINESS OF GENERATIONS *on page 139*

DR ANTHONY N. SABGA. ANSA MCAL'S *historical account records his migration from* SYRIA *to* TRINIDAD *and* TOBAGO *in 1930.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ANSA MCAL GROUP OF COMPANIES · ANSAMCAL.COM · PHOTOGRAPH RECORD

THE BUSINESS OF GENERATIONS

Migration, manufacturing and succession shaped TRINIDAD *and* TOBAGO'S *family enterprises. Their histories reveal how personal authority becomes an institution—and why heritage, ownership and control need separate records.*

By PEARCE ROBINSON

MIGRATION BEFORE INCORPORATION

The National Library and Information System Authority places early Syrian-Lebanese arrivals in Trinidad in the opening years of the twentieth century. It identifies George Habib and Amin Abraham among those arriving in 1904 and 1905, and describes settlement in Port of Spain. Its account records relatives helping finance further migration: established arrivals accumulated resources, supported family overseas and helped others make the journey.[1]

That history locates enterprise within household effort before it appears in a company register. Accommodation, introductions and remittances could help a new arrival participate in commerce. Their contribution should remain visible without being converted into a claim that every migrant prospered or that a diverse community possessed one commercial character. The surviving firm is more easily found in the record than the venture that disappeared.

The arrivals entered colonial Trinidad. Their descendants traded, manufactured and invested through different political and economic periods. A century of business cannot be explained as one uninterrupted entrepreneurial moment. Incorporation, policy changes, access to credit and the development of new markets belong beside the account of family persistence.

▶ Sources for this page

"ANSA MCAL *dates* ANSA INDUSTRIES' *manufacture of refrigerators, televisions and other household items to 1966, and records a* PRIME MINISTER'S EXPORT AWARD *in 1968.*"

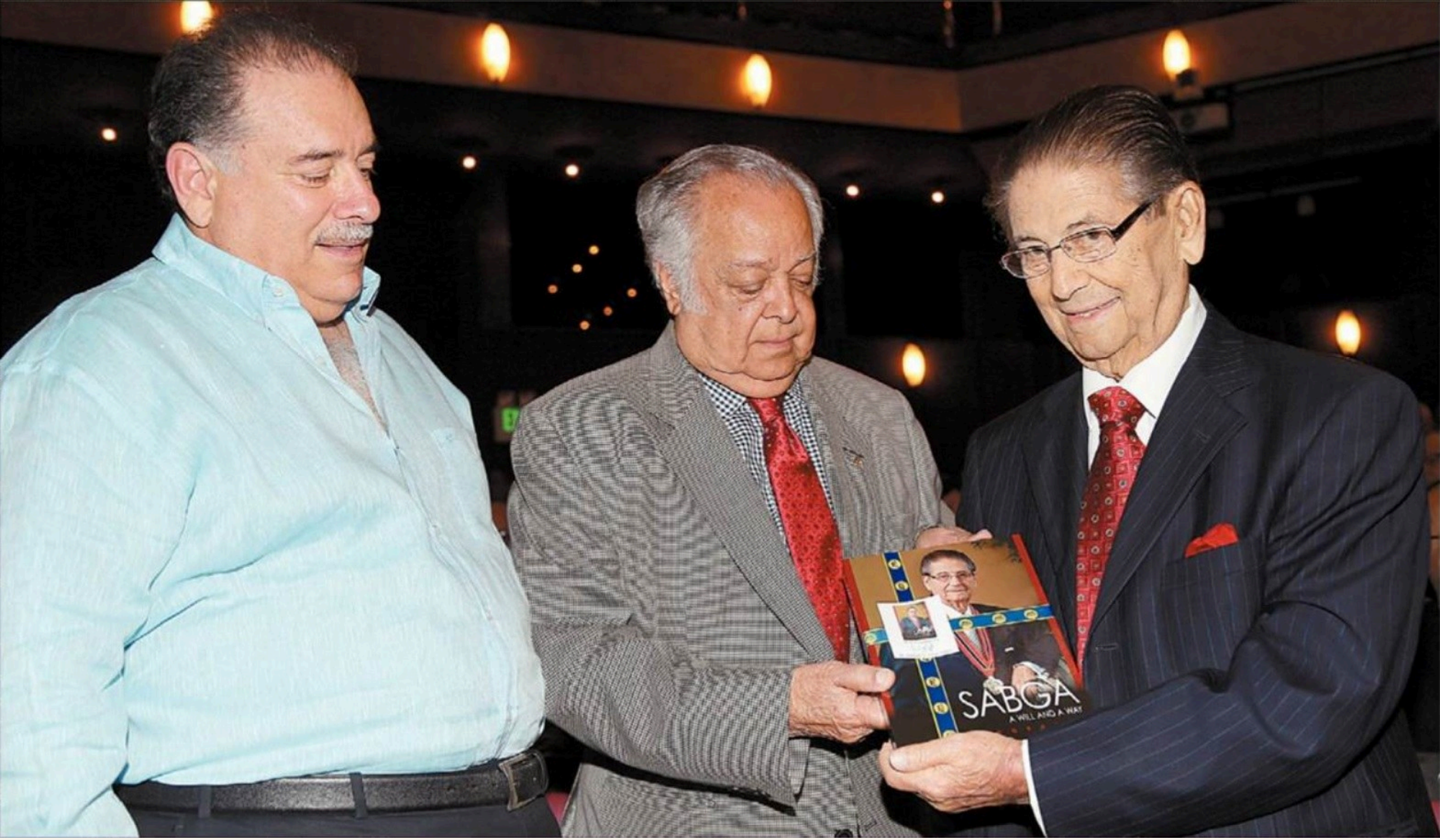
FROM AGENCY TO MANUFACTURING

Anthony N. Sabga supplies a documented connection between Syrian migration and a major Trinidad and Tobago enterprise. ANSA McAL's account following his death in 2017 states that he emigrated from Syria in 1930 and entered commerce through his father's concern, NS Sabga and Sons. It records regional agency relationships for Bosch, Heidelberg and Frico milk during the 1950s and 1960s.[2]

Agency work placed the intermediary between international suppliers and local customers. Delivery, payment, servicing and reputation had to be reconciled across those relationships. The commercial education available in a family concern could be carried into new activities, but each activity introduced requirements of its own.

ANSA McAL dates ANSA Industries' manufacture of refrigerators, televisions and other household items to 1966, and records a Prime Minister's Export Award in 1968. This was a movement from representation into production, with demands for equipment, quality control and organised labour. The dates and activities come from the company's historical account; its promotional assessments are not an independent evaluation of performance.[2]

▶ Sources for this page



A WILL AND A WAY *on page 142*

DR ANTHONY N. SABGA *shows A* WILL *and a* WAY *to* SIR SHRIDATH RAMPHAL, *with his son* NORMAN *A.* SABGA *at left.* CENTRAL BANK AUDITORIUM, PORT *of* SPAIN, *26* AUGUST *2015; identification follows* ANSA MCAL'S *caption.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ANSA MCAL GROUP OF COMPANIES · ANSAMCAL.COM · PHOTOGRAPH RECORD

"NORMAN SABGA'S directorship to 1986, his deputy chairmanship to 1992, his appointment as group chief executive to 1996 and his chairmanship to 2000, when his father retired."

THE HISTORIES JOINED BY ACQUISITION

In 1986 Sabga's ANSA Group acquired a major stake in McEnearney Alstons. UWI's republication of his 1998 honorary-degree citation records the purchase of 330 million stock units. The transaction joined previously separate corporate histories, workforces and assets; it did not make the purchaser the founder of everything subsequently gathered within the group.[3]

Leadership succession can also be followed through specific appointments. ANSA McAL's board biography dates A. Norman Sabga's directorship to 1986, his deputy chairmanship to 1992, his appointment as group chief executive to 1996 and his chairmanship to 2000, when his father retired. The record describes a succession extending across several roles and years.[4]

Those appointments establish familial continuity and a sequence of responsibilities. They cannot disclose every internal debate, assessment of candidates or preparation for office. Nor do titles establish beneficial-ownership percentages. Shareholding, executive responsibility and family relationship remain different facts.

▶ Sources for this page

"It records the decision to establish manufacturing, with production beginning in 1976 and peanut butter its first manufactured product."

OTHER FAMILIES, DIFFERENT PATHS

ACADO Foods identifies Victor and Sally Mouttet as its founders in 1958 and traces its beginnings to commodity trading. Wagner College's 2021 profile documents Christian Mouttet's participation in the family enterprise. These records establish a family-business history without supplying a basis for assigning Syrian-Lebanese identity.[5, 6]

ACADO's timeline describes import restrictions under the Negative List affecting goods that could be manufactured locally. It records the decision to establish manufacturing, with production beginning in 1976 and peanut butter its first manufactured product. The change belongs to an account of policy and commercial response as well as founders' initiative.[5]

Associated Brands Industries Limited dates establishment to 1974 and identifies Arthur Lok Jack as the person who formed the company. Its account names Nicholas Lok Jack as deputy chairman and group chief executive, and describes confectionery, snacks, cereals and biscuits, including a partnership with United Biscuits and the later purchase of that partner's minority holding. No ethnicity or undocumented family relationship is inferred here from a surname.[7]

▶ Sources for this page



A HISTORY SHARED *on page 145*

DR ANTHONY N. SABGA *with guests at the launch of A* WILL *and a* WAY, CENTRAL BANK AUDITORIUM, *26* AUGUST *2015.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ANSA MCAL GROUP OF COMPANIES · ANSAMCAL.COM · PHOTOGRAPH RECORD

"It dates the phased introduction of a new risk-management framework to 2022 and describes reporting from operating companies through executive management to the board."

SUCCESSION BEYOND THE CHAIR

As a company grows, knowledge once held personally has to become available to people outside the founding household. Investment decisions need challenge, risks need records and professional managers need clear authority. Familiarity can support trust while leaving those obligations unresolved.

ANSA McAL's governance statement describes board responsibilities, stakeholder engagement and enterprise risk management. It dates the phased introduction of a new risk-management framework to 2022 and describes reporting from operating companies through executive management to the board. These are stated arrangements, not an independent audit of their effectiveness.[8]

The questions extend to family enterprises generally: how performance is evaluated, who can question an investment, and how a conflict between a relative's preference and the firm's requirements is resolved. A change of chair is visible on a date. The capacity to make and examine decisions must continue before and after it.

▶ Sources for this page

"The next generation inherits supplier relationships, technical knowledge and institutions, as well as the task of deciding what to change."

THE INHERITANCE WORTH FOLLOWING

The records show several kinds of transfer: relatives financing migration, a son joining his father's trading concern, agency knowledge travelling into manufacturing, acquisition joining older businesses, and authority passing through dated corporate appointments. They also show food manufacturing responding to public policy and expanding through products and partnerships.

Syrian-Lebanese heritage belongs within that history where the evidence establishes it. Elsewhere the accurate description is a named company, a documented family relationship or a particular transaction. A surname cannot explain voting rights, present ownership or the contribution of employees, lenders and customers.

The next generation inherits supplier relationships, technical knowledge and institutions, as well as the task of deciding what to change. Preserving useful capabilities may require new expertise, different processes and scrutiny beyond the founding family. A commercial legacy remains productive when it can organise people and capital around work for which customers continue to pay.

▶ Sources for this page



WHERE OPPORTUNITY TAKES ROOT *on page 148*

UWI ST AUGUSTINE *campus.* CONTEXTUAL *photograph of the institution, not a record of a training programme outcome.*

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BEFORE THE SUCCESS STORY

In TRINIDAD *and* TOBAGO, *young founders are building staffing agencies, water sensors, steelpan software and farms.* EMPOWERMENT *becomes real when the training ends and the business has to find its second customer, and then its tenth.*

By PEARCE ROBINSON

THE WORK ALREADY UNDER WAY

The usual speech about young people in Trinidad and Tobago describes them as the future. The record shows them working in the present. In 2025 a UWI graduate won startup capital for a sensor that tells households how much water is left in the tank. A sixteen-year-old from Malick built a steelpan app. A founder who places Trinbagonian professionals with American firms won a pitch competition in Brooklyn. Twenty-two more graduated from a twelve-week incubator in Port of Spain.[4, 5, 6, 7]

None of those achievements is yet a finished success story, and none needs to be presented as one. Each is a beginning that has been documented. The question this essay pursues is what happens next: what lets a promising venture become a company that hires, exports and lasts, and what in this country still stands in its way.

Empowerment is too often measured at the ceremony, in certificates, cheques and photographs. Its real measure arrives later, in the second order, the first employee, the loan repaid and the market found outside the island.

▶ Sources for this page

“KYLON THOMAS, *sixteen, of* MALICK SECONDARY SCHOOL, *won* CARIRI’S INNOVATION NATION POWERUP *2025 with* STEELPAN LIFE, *a digital steelpan application.*”

FOUR YOUNG FOUNDERS ON THE RECORD

Kyle Gajadhar, a UWI St Augustine alumnus, took first place in the UWI Connect Build & Pitch competition with an Internet-connected water-tank monitor, a real-time level sensor aimed at a problem familiar to any household that has waited on a truck-borne supply. The campus reported TT$15,000 in startup capital from Unit Trust Corporation, and a field of 43 trained participants and nine finalists.[5]

Kylon Thomas, sixteen, of Malick Secondary School, won CARIRI’s Innovation Nation PowerUp 2025 with Steelpan Life, a digital steelpan application. The national instrument, born in the yards of Laventille and Port of Spain, is being carried by a teenager into software. CARIRI’s camp that year engaged more than 3,000 secondary-school students in coding, entrepreneurship and climate work.[6]

▶ Sources for this page

"Her company recruits TRINIDAD *and* TOBAGO *professionals for remote roles with* US *employers and, by its own account, guarantees staff pay even when a client defaults."*

Amina Blake-Foreman, chief executive and co-founder of Vibe Connections, won the inaugural Carib Biz Network and UberSoca Cruise pitch competition in New York in June 2025. Her company recruits Trinidad and Tobago professionals for remote roles with US employers and, by its own account, guarantees staff pay even when a client defaults. It is an export business whose product is local talent, earning foreign exchange without anyone leaving home.[7, 8]

The regional field is just as instructive. Kerri-Ann Bovell of Barbados, whose EcoMyco turns sargassum and cassava peel into biodegradable materials, began the venture as a UWI student and received a special mention from CAF in 2025. The seaweed that fouls Tobago's beaches is, in her hands, a raw material.[11]

THE UNIVERSITY AS A PLACE TO TEST

UTT's uSTART, launched in 2014, offers students, alumni and staff mentoring, workshops, networking and seed financing. The university's March 2021 account lists activity in fashion, animation, information technology, agriculture, engineering, manufacturing and health. It is a snapshot from that date, not a survival report.[1, 2]

▶ Sources for this page

"YOUTH BUSINESS TRINIDAD *and* TOBAGO'S JUMPSTART *incubator graduated 22 entrepreneurs from its first 2025 cohort in* OCTOBER, *its fourteenth cohort since 2019.*"

Its best-known example is Coded Arts, the animation and development studio founded by former students Andy Berahazar Jr. and Brian Perry, for whom uSTART supplied workspace, computers and mentoring. Equipment and specialist advice are expensive for a new firm to assemble alone; incubation lets a founder test the idea before risking much more money.[2]

Incubation still cannot supply a customer, a price or a reason to return. The university's historical account does not tell us the studio's present revenue or staff. What it does show is the value of a building where a young person with an idea can find a desk, a machine and someone who has done it before.

INCUBATORS AND THE SECOND CHAPTER

Youth Business Trinidad and Tobago's JumpSTART incubator graduated 22 entrepreneurs from its first 2025 cohort in October, its fourteenth cohort since 2019. Chief executive Shedron Collins told them that graduation was "really the last paragraph of chapter one", and put the commercial test plainly: "If you solve a problem for someone, you have a customer. If you solve a problem for no one, you have a hobby."[4]

▶ Sources for this page

"Technical excellence and commercial skill have to meet in the same young person, or in the same team."

That is the right standard. The danger in youth enterprise programmes is that they reward the pitch rather than the trade. A deck can be polished in twelve weeks; a supply chain cannot. Corporate sponsorship, such as bmobile's support for JumpSTART and PowerUp, matters most when it extends beyond the ceremony into procurement, mentoring and access to real buyers.[4, 6]

HEART/NSTA Trust in Jamaica offers one model worth studying here: business training that sits alongside technical training, so that a skilled technician also learns to price, cost and market the work. Technical excellence and commercial skill have to meet in the same young person, or in the same team.[3]

THE LAND AND THE FARM

The Youth Agricultural Homestead Programme, funded by the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service and taught at UTT's ECIAF campus at Centeno, offers 18-to-35-year-olds a one-year Certificate in Agriculture and Agro-Processing followed by entrepreneurship training and an industry attachment.[9]

▶ Sources for this page

"Those were the stated terms at launch; whether every graduate has received land, title and grant is a matter the ministry should report publicly and in full."

At its 2022 launch the ministry received 1,400 applications for 200 places. Completing participants were promised access to two acres under lease, a starter home, a produce shed and a $20,000 grant. Those were the stated terms at launch; whether every graduate has received land, title and grant is a matter the ministry should report publicly and in full.[10]

The demand alone is a finding. Seven applicants for every place suggests that young Trinbagonians do want to farm, provided farming comes with land security and a route to market. A country importing most of its food cannot afford to turn six of every seven away.

WHAT STOPS A BUSINESS SCALING

Talent is not the binding constraint. The obstacles that recur in conversation with founders are structural: foreign exchange that is hard to obtain for cloud services, software subscriptions and online advertising; payment processing that makes selling abroad awkward; collateral requirements that a twenty-five-year-old cannot meet; and a domestic market of about 1.4 million people.

▶ Sources for this page

"When access to foreign currency is rationed, the firms that most need it to grow, and that could earn it back through exports, are penalised first."

A digital start-up pays for its servers, tools and advertising in US dollars from its first day. When access to foreign currency is rationed, the firms that most need it to grow, and that could earn it back through exports, are penalised first. Any serious youth enterprise policy has to address that directly rather than through another training course.

The Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas commits CARICOM to the movement of capital, labour and technology across the region. For a young founder that promise means something only if a Trinidad firm can register, invoice and be paid in Kingston, Bridgetown and Georgetown without paperwork that costs more than the contract. The diaspora in New York, Toronto and London is the other natural market, as Vibe Connections has shown.[12, 7]

▶ Sources for this page

"It means foreign-exchange windows for exporters, procurement set-asides that are actually honoured, and patient capital priced for risk rather than collateral."

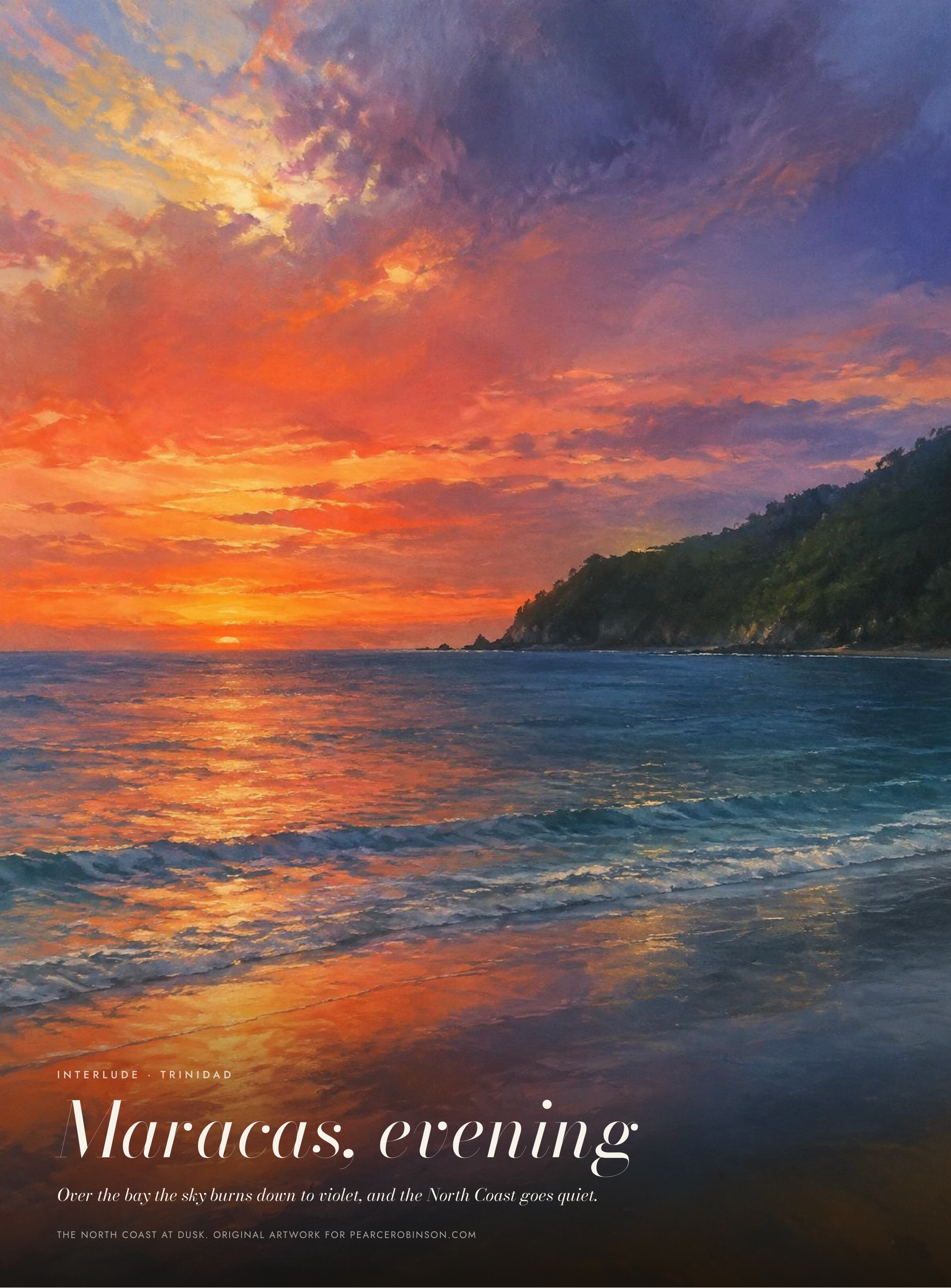
EMPOWERMENT THAT CAN BE MEASURED

The young people in this essay are not waiting to be empowered. They have built sensors, apps, agencies and cohorts on the strength of their own work. What the State and the private sector owe them is a system that does not lose them between the ceremony and the second year of trading.

That means publishing outcomes rather than enrolment: how many incubator graduates are still trading after two years, how many YAHP graduates hold land, how many young firms have exported. It means foreign-exchange windows for exporters, procurement set-asides that are actually honoured, and patient capital priced for risk rather than collateral.

Trinidad and Tobago has spent decades exporting its young talent. The founders profiled here suggest another course: building at home the companies that will employ the next generation, and selling their work to the world.

▶ Sources for this page



INTERLUDE · TRINIDAD

Maracas, evening

Over the bay the sky burns down to violet, and the North Coast goes quiet.

THE NORTH COAST AT DUSK. ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR PEARCEROBINSON.COM

WHAT SURVIVES THE ANNOUNCEMENT

By PEARCE ROBINSON

An announcement offers a future in which difficult choices have already been resolved. A waterfront is complete, investment has arrived, training has led to employment and a financing agreement has delivered better services. Public records bring those promises back into the sequence of decisions through which they might become real.

The reporting in this edition returns repeatedly to that sequence. Barbados's financing operations have different dates, partners, currencies and purposes. A programme of urban redevelopment has to pass through planning, procurement, financing and construction. An enterprise's history cannot establish the terms on which it operates today.

Keeping those stages visible is useful to people who have no specialist interest in a policy debate. It shows where responsibility sits, which questions can already be answered and which require another record. The work continues after the ceremony, when the people expected to benefit need to know what was delivered.

INSTITUTIONS WITH A MEMORY

The strongest examples of continuity in this issue depend on institutions capable of keeping a record. A company documents its beginnings and its later organisation. A university preserves a body of research. A cultural archive retains performances, photographs and testimony that cannot be recreated once their makers are gone.

Such a record is never complete by accident. Someone has to preserve it, describe it and make it available. Someone also has to ask whose experience remains outside it. The documentary account of a company may explain an investment while leaving workers' lives largely unrecorded; a national celebration may honour an art form while its practitioners still need rehearsal space and income.

Journalism can bring those gaps into view without pretending it has already filled them. Documentary essays should identify the records they use, and reporting that requires testimony should obtain it. The reader is entitled to know the difference between a published statement, a recorded observation and a question still awaiting an answer.

A FUTURE OPEN TO EXAMINATION

Leadership becomes durable when responsibility can be followed beyond the individual. Agreements need institutions to implement them, training requires an economy able to use the skills it develops and cultural inheritance depends on people who can carry a practice into another generation.

The Caribbean's small scale can make relationships unusually visible, while the systems governing finance and trade remain distant and complex. A publication can help connect the two. It can keep the original record available, examine the decisions that follow it and give a reader enough context to question an account that appears too convenient.

This inaugural edition ends with that purpose. Its subjects will continue to develop after November 2026. Their next chapter belongs to the evidence that becomes available and to the people whose lives those decisions affect. A magazine can preserve this moment without asking the reader to mistake it for the last word.

SOURCES, DATES AND ATTRIBUTION

The press-freedom reprint and the Mia Mottley cover feature are reproduced from the existing approved publication registry, retaining every body paragraph, their original headlines, dates and citations. The digital edition links back to each first-publication page.

The ten new essays on security, Haiti, great-power competition, the US midterms, Guyana, climate finance, citizenship by investment, migration, reparations and the Henry-Robinson profile draw on the public records identified with their numbered references, current to 14 November 2026. The restored Business of Generations essay retains its full text and company-source references. These are analysis from the record, not claims of new interviews or field visits.

Every numbered reference opens an on-site Document Room record. These records distinguish a newsroom summary from an original document and provide the external source address. A statutory provision, an official policy, a company statement and an editorial interpretation should be read according to their respective status.

Where a negotiation, lawsuit or election count was unresolved at the reporting date, the essays say so. Announcements, proposals and enacted law are kept distinct, and no outcome has been inserted without evidence.

THE IMAGE AND ITS RECORD

Cover: approved Issue 01 artwork supplied for PEARCE ROBINSON — The Magazine. Editor, page 6: Pearce Robinson's full official flag portrait, © Pearce Robinson. Mia Mottley opening portrait, page 30: commissioned for PearceRobinson.com, copyright retained by the publication.

The Mottley documentary portfolio appears only within the dedicated cover feature on pages 30–41. Individual captions retain photographer and institutional credits, dates, source records and reuse licences.

The full-page opening illustrations were created for this issue; they are artworks rather than photographs of events. Red House, page 11: Baba Kii Sun, CC BY 3.0. The full-length portrait of the Reverend Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson was supplied by Pearce Robinson; its photographer is not identified. The existing photograph of her at her induction as Moderator of the Free Churches Group, 13 April 2025: photograph by Andy Jackson/URC, via Churches Together in England.

The Business of Generations includes three historical photographs from ANSA McAL's website: Dr Anthony N. Sabga's portrait, his autobiography presentation to Sir Shridath Ramphal and guests at the launch. Each retains its company credit and source-page link. Other reprint images retain their existing supplied or licensed credits. Their use does not create a new ownership claim. Architectural or editorial illustrations are identified by their existing caption rather than being represented as photographs of completed projects.

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People and institutions seeking a response to reporting can use the right-of-reply page. Source approaches belong through the secure source-contact process, rather than public correspondence that could expose confidential information.

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This digital issue is complimentary. Magazine subscription prices are invitations for future editions, not an active order. Print production, delivery arrangements and a press-ready edition remain subject to supplier confirmation.

JOURNALISM THAT ANSWERS TO ITS READERS

Independent reporting is paid for by the people who read it. Two funds keep this work in the field and on the record.

By PEARCE ROBINSON

Every investigation in this issue began with a record that someone had to find, request, read and check. That work takes time, equipment and, when reporting is challenged, the means to defend it.

The Newsroom Fund equips the reporting itself: the camera, the editing computer and the monitor behind field work, documentaries and analysis. The Legal Defence Fund exists so that the right to report can be defended when it is tested. Both accept contributions securely on PearceRobinson.com.

Membership, described on the pages that follow, sustains the publication month by month. A contribution to either fund, of any size, keeps independent journalism possible in the Caribbean.

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THE LEGAL DEFENCE FUND

Defending the right to report.

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PAGE 165

THE NEWSROOM FUND

Equipment for field reporting, documentaries and analysis.

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Provisional annual magazine prices cover the editions and destinations described below. Ordering remains closed while printing costs and delivery arrangements are confirmed.

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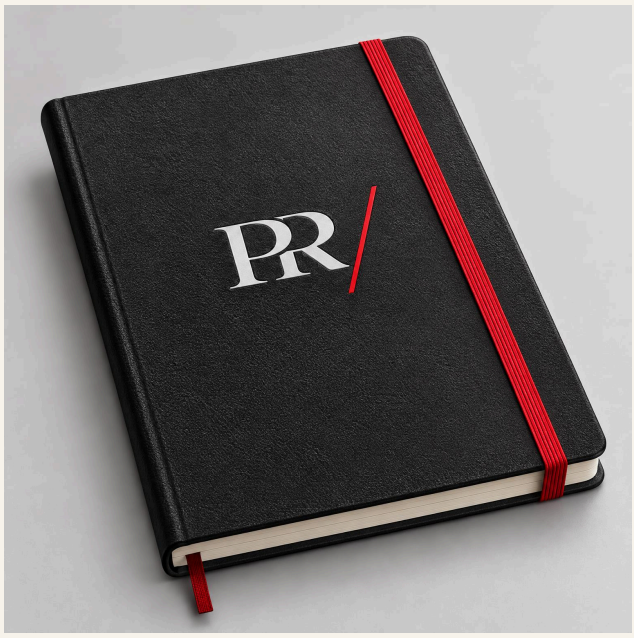
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THE RECORD CONTINUES

The next edition is planned for May 2027. Its final contents will follow the evidence and commissioning decisions rather than promises of an interview, investigation or access that has not been secured.

The continuing departments will follow international affairs, business and enterprise, the next generation, accountability, money and development, heritage and leadership. Published updates will remain available on the site between magazine editions.

Readers can bring documents, institutions and developments of public interest to the publication's attention through its contact page, along with any supporting records. Confidential approaches belong through the source-contact channel.

Membership supports the continuing publication separately from magazine subscriptions. The available benefits and proposed additions are described on the membership page.

PEARCE ROBINSON

THE MAGAZINE · ISSUE 01 · NOVEMBER 2026



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A Free Press Matters

INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM. THE CARIBBEAN AND THE WORLD.

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