
Prisoners angry over cases being adjourned

JADA LOUTOO Thursday, April 27 2017

A NEAR riot occurred at the Port of Spain Magistrates Court yesterday after several men on murder charges complained about their cases being adjourned and possibly having to be restarted after the elevation of former chief magistrate Marcia Ayers-Caesar as a judge in the High Court.

Several prisoners, some of whom have been in custody for the last six years, began complaining loudly after Deputy Chief Magistrate Maria Busby Earle-Caddle adjourned their matters to next month.

Busby Earle-Caddle is acting as chief magistrate until an appointment is made by the Judicial and Legal Services Commission and said she needed to get advice on how to proceed with some of the cases in the Eighth Magistrates Court.

When some of the prisoners became agitated yesterday, they were ordered out of the docks and taken to the holding cells at the St Vincent Street courthouse, where they continued to complain. Sources said the prisoners had to be forcefully quieted by police officers.

Two weeks ago concerns of unfinished cases left behind by Ayers-Caesar were raised and earlier this week, Law Association president Douglas Mendes, SC, indicated that they will meet with Chief Justice Ivor Archie, the attorney general and the director of public prosecutions to find a workable solution. Mendes, on behalf of the association, also expressed "immediate concerns about the fact that a judge was appointed and took up office leaving behind outstanding, part-heard matters." In a statement, the Judiciary's Court Protocol and Information Manager Alicia Carter-Fisher had assured that the magistrates court would not be adversely affected.

Carter-Fisher said there were no ongoing preliminary inquiries before Ayers-Caesar but she was presiding over paper committals which could be continued by another magistrate