



# LAW ASSOCIATION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

---

## MEDIA RELEASE

On December 30, 2024, a State of Emergency (SOE) was declared in Trinidad and Tobago in accordance with Part III of the Constitution, on the basis:

*“that action has been taken, or is immediately threatened, by any person, of such a nature and on so extensive a scale, as to be likely to endanger the public safety or to deprive the community or any substantial portion of the community of supplies or services essential to life.”*

The murder toll for 2024 reached a historic high and utterances made by the Honourable Acting Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago and the Honourable Minister of National Security when the SOE was declared, suggested that the Government and the Police had reason to believe that recent gang-related murders were likely to provoke retaliatory action and that the declaration of a SOE was necessary to treat with a feared further escalation in violent activity. This, of course, is a judgment call that is the Government’s to make.

In recent times, what has been reported as gang-related violence has undoubtedly provided a direct threat to the safety of the citizenry of this country. Reports of communities operating under the effective control of certain gangs have been widespread. There are widespread reports of members of the public being required to seek the “*permission*” of gang “*soldiers*” before entering certain communities. Service providers are reported to be unable to ply their trade in certain communities without paying compensation to those who represent themselves as being “*in charge*” of those communities. Public utilities reportedly remain un-serviced because repairmen are fearful of falling prey to extortion and violence. Even the nation’s health workers, as they struggle to assist participants in and victims of, violent gang activity, have been caught in the cross-fire between warring gang factions.

The Government and the Police, with the declaration of a SOE, are now permitted, in treating with the problem, to act in a manner which is not consistent with the fundamental rights and

freedoms afforded to the citizenry under Part 1 of the Constitution. Nefarious gang violence may be the target of the prescribed treatment, but the corpus of our citizenry must also endure the treatment.

The Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago sincerely hopes that the stated objectives of the SOE will be realised in the shortest possible time.

**LAW ASSOCIATION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

**2<sup>nd</sup> January 2025**