



NEWS

DON'T SACRIFICE JAMAICA FOR 'DUDUS', LAWYER WARNS

Reprinted from the



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Wednesday, March 03, 2010

UNITED States-based attorney Professor David Rowe, yesterday warned the Jamaica Labour Party Government to be careful not to put the fate of an entire nation on the 'fortunes' of one individual.

Rowe's warning comes a day after Washington lashed Kingston for its failure to extradite Tivoli Gardens strongman Christopher 'Dudus' Coke to face drug trafficking charges in the US, and questioned Jamaica's commitment to law enforcement co-operation.

"The fate of one person will jeopardise the bi-lateral relationship. Jamaica wants to be a part of the international community; Jamaica does not want to be some backwater where we are subject to the whims and fancies of drug dealers," Rowe, a Jamaican, told the Observer.

Prime Minister Bruce Golding, speaking in Parliament yesterday, hinted that his Government was not keen on signing the extradition order as evidence collected against Coke bordered on illegal.

But Rowe said Golding's stance could have dire consequences for the nation's security and economy.

"Jamaica's income comes from the overseas community and tourism. The US relationship is vital to the Jamaican economy. It is of great importance that the Government be careful about how it responds to an extradition request of that nature," Rowe said.

Rowe was also critical of the JLP Government's unwillingness to arrest Coke and allow the matter to be heard by a local judge as has been the practice in the past.

"Why hasn't that individual been arrested and face the courts? Why are we trying to subvert the process?" Rowe asked. "This country ought to observe its obligation under the extradition treaty and in doing so we would preserve the bi-lateral process and not create a crisis which is what we are now doing," said Rowe.

At the same time, he called for the resignations of Attorney General and Justice Minister Dorothy Lightbourne, as well as Senator Tom Tavares-Finson.

Finson, he said, was burdened by a conflict of interest as he is Coke's attorney and also a Government member of the Senate.

He said that Lightbourne, who has the responsibility of signing extradition requests, should do the honourable thing and resign because of her failure to give the go-ahead for Coke to face charges in the US.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Opposition People's National Party, Robert Pickersgill, accused Golding of being indecisive on the Dudus extradition request.

"He (Golding) talks beautifully around the subject," Pickersgill told the Observer.

The US State Department has accused Coke of conspiracy to distribute marijuana and cocaine, as well as conspiracy to illegally traffic firearms.

The United States, last August, asked Jamaica to arrest Coke and extradite him to the Southern District of New York to answer to the alleged charges.