



PRESS RELEASE

Bill No. 16 of 2024 – The Acquisition of Lands for Public Purpose (Amendment) Act must be sent to Special Select Committee

Georgetown, December 17, 2024

The International Decade for People of African Descent Assembly-Guyana (IDPADA-G) is concerned that the proposed amendment - Bill No. 16 of 2024 – The Acquisition of Lands for Public Purpose (Amendment) Act poses a threat to landownership for all Guyanese, particularly to African Guyanese who are the beneficiaries of Ancestral lands (lands purchased, granted, and occupied). This Amendment must be sent to Special Select Committee for careful review and debate and should be subjected to a transparent and inclusive consultative process.

If passed, the bill will give a “Minister” of government sweeping power to determine the lawful owners of land to be acquired for public purposes and to establish its value for government acquisition with no public hearings or consultation.

All landowners will be affected by this amendment. IDPADA-G is concerned that African Guyanese and the Ancestral Land to which they are entitled will be most affected given the unfinished work of bringing up to date and modernizing the ownership patterns and titles for these lands.

From 1839, immediately after Emancipation, Africans purchased abandoned plantations amounting to thousands of acres of land along the coast, additional lands were granted for their use by the Crown. These lands – both purchased and granted, communally or individually represent the land bequeathed to today’s African Guyanese community by their forefathers. Ownership of the land by African Guyanese is not a matter of dispute. What is required is political will to update documentation of ownership.

IDPADA-G calls for government to complete the work of the Land Commission of Inquiry launched in 2017 to address historic and complex land holding issues – provide title for undivided communal and crown land; document ownership and provide current titles for individual ownership..

The proposed bill would exploit vulnerable landowners. The amendment cedes power to a “Minister to make an advance cash payment to **an interested and authorized person**” to acquire land for public purposes without consultation or opportunity for redress or negotiation. The bill grants inordinate power to a Minister of government and robs citizens of protection of their right to landownership.

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