



PR#113-24

PRESS RELEASE

MOHW Investigates Reports of Threatening Behaviour Toward Southern Regional Hospital Staff

Belmopan, July 16, 2024.

The Ministry of Health & Wellness has been informed of a news item circulating on the media bearing the following caption **“Relatives of Patients Break Hospital’s Door, Window”**. The item endeavors to provide a narrative of a series of incidents, which includes purported damage to government property, which allegedly took place at the Southern Regional Hospital on the night of 14th July 2024.

Since the publication, an investigation has been carried out by the Ministry to determine the veracity of the allegation and the following forms the findings:

On the 14th day of July 2024, the staff of the Accident and Emergency Unit of the Southern Regional Hospital encountered a violent incident at the hands of persons purporting to be friends and/or relatives of victims of a road traffic incident who were brought into the facility for medical attention at or around 10:54 p.m.

Approximately thirty minutes after their arrival, either friends and/or relatives of the injured patients arrived and forced themselves into the Unit’s triage area and attempted to enter the Emergency Department. To allow for staff to provide the required attention without unnecessary interruptions, the doors of the A&E were closed. Thereafter, a female voice was heard threatening to throw down the door if she/they were not allowed inside, this was accompanied with what sounded like banging on the door. The security personnel of the hospital were alerted and attempts to diffuse the situation were made but proved futile. The police were then called in.

The incident, as detailed above, reflects what is now being perceived as continuous aggressive and threatening behavior by the public towards

medical staff, which cannot be countenanced. The attention of the public is drawn to the fact that in addressing medical emergencies staff require the space to employ all medical skills to preserve life and safety; this includes privacy in the emergency areas. Relatives and/or friends **cannot and must not** obstruct medical personnel who require space to be able to move quickly to provide emergency care and an environment free from potential contaminants.

The public is advised that it is an offence pursuant to the Criminal Code, CAP 101 of the Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020, to threaten a public officer in the course of duty or to obstruct a public officer in the execution of their public duty.

The attention and cooperation of the public is hereby requested.

Ends