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PRESS RELEASE

Government Releases Mendes Legal Opinion on Portico Agreement

Belmopan, July 7, 2023.

Government is aware of numerous defamatory video ads being broadcasted by various media stations, along with news reports and commentaries by UDP political operatives, spreading gross misinformation and falsehoods concerning certain members of Cabinet and its deliberations on the matter of the Portico Agreement executed under the former UDP Administration.

As such, government has decided that it is best that the legal opinion of Mr. Douglas Mendes, SC, concerning the agreement, provided on 4th May 2023, be formally released to the public forthwith for its own perusal.

To be clear, it was on the basis of the advice of Mr. Mendes that the Cabinet paper concerning the UDP Portico Agreement, and the accompanying draft bill, was prepared and presented to Cabinet in the form that was submitted.

Among other things, and contrary to the false assertions made by UDP political operatives and broadcast by certain media houses, Mr. Mendes opined that “the Agreement plainly falls within the portfolio of the Minister [Erwin Contreras] who signed the Agreement . . . this has two consequences; it supports the view that the Minister [Erwin Contreras] had implied actual authority to enter the Agreement on behalf of the Government and the ostensible authority to do so.” He further continued that “the Agreement cannot be invalidated on the ground that the Minister [Erwin Contreras] did not have the authority to execute the Agreement on behalf of the Government.” The opinion also highlighted certain provisions of the agreement that should not be given the force of law.

As is now common knowledge, despite the Mendes opinion, Cabinet nonetheless rejected the requests set out in the paper in the public interest.

Ends