



Caribbean Federation of Police Welfare Associations

Office of the Caribbean Federation of Police welfare Associations, Police HQ, Bay Street St. Vincent and the Grenadines, WI

www.cfpwa.com email: info@cfpwa.com Tele #: 1 784 456 2159/ 1 784 434 0214

I want to start by thanking The Bahamas Government, Bahamas Police Commissioner; and the Bahamas Police Staff Association for hosting our 8th AGM under the theme “*Making Police Welfare a strategic priority in all police Organisations in the Caribbean*”.

The Bahamas has a special place in the history of the Federation. Eight years ago, we came to the Bahamas where we completed our constitution, we had our first elections and it was the first time the federation moved from having an interim to a formal executive

Since then we have progressed smoothly at times and at other times we would have to fare many challenges that threatened our existence. In 2019 we are a legally registered body, we have our own financial accounts, website and newsletter. We are prepared to voice our concerns at the regional level whenever we are required to do so.

As we progress in our efforts to bring welfare, there are times when we have more questions than answers like, why our women officers in Belize would be served with disciplinary notices because of their hairstyle, of course, the real question is why is their retention of such a disciplinary offence in an era where gender issues have educated us on these issues. Why is it that police associations are failing to stand as predictors of welfare in the organisations in which they exist? Why is it that many Commissioners of Police are claiming chief welfare officer status but are willing to exist in an administrative and legal framework that fosters transactional behaviour?

We as a Federation have been continuously scanning our regional environment and have found substantial disparity in the terms and conditions among our comrades in the various jurisdictions. We have found instances where the way police officers are treated is borderline if not exploited.

We have witnessed in some of our member states a 40hour work week is not recognized and many of our officers’ work very long hours with valued compensation. These unfair employment



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practices remind us that Welfare is either neglected or not considered in strategic planning in these organisations. Welfare leaders who standby and do not challenge this status quo must know that the Federation holds you vicariously responsible.

Sometimes it seems that power at the management level and welfare are sworn, enemies. Many Commissioners of Police are yet to learn that Welfare is not an obstacle. It's not just about the big picture the truth exists in every aspect of police from performance management to retirement. As my colleagues from Trinidad would testify, the gist of our collective proposals has always been both a performance management tool and a motivator for performance in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. Welfare stands as the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy work environment.

To say the least, as police officers we are creatures of statute everything we do is subject to documented and undocumented regulations and norms. We crave for those in power to stop manipulating the perspective on police welfare. Stop publicly giving us the deceptive pat on the back accompanied by the anecdotes of how noble we are because we risk our lives every day. We need you to stop the lip service, show real compassion, and do what is right to enable healthy work environments that are welfare-centric to be a priority.

Amend and enact legislation that provides autonomy for our welfare associations. Screen your local environment: How many of us are functioning on legislation that is incapable of addressing contemporary issues in policing. How many police organisations preach transformational leadership but operate within an administrative and legislative framework that is designed to facilitate transactional type leadership. A Welfare association that is designed to exist without



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having autonomy is nothing short of an indecent proposal that is manifested in the transactional environment that only promotes an unhealthy environment.

In concluding, it is the Federation's hope that Caribbean Police organisations would address at least one of their welfare issues and that collectively we can improve the state of welfare for police officers. Recognizing:

1. The need to acknowledge that welfare is core, it is strategic and imperative in the 21st Century.
2. That the need for innovations in policing strategies must include bringing innovations to welfare.
3. That there are a role and function for welfare at the management table
4. That any strategy that does not include welfare is no strategy

Thank you

President (CFPWA)