



# WORK MATTERS COLUMN

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# Concerns of an Estate Constables

A precept is a certificate issued under the hand of the Commissioner of Police authorizing the security officer named, to act as an estate constable. However, these officers are guided under the Supplemental Police Act 15:02, and carry the rank of police officers but not above the rank of corporal. These officers are in charge of controlling and maintaining order in their estates, by conducting foot patrols, and maintaining the post diary, registers, and other administrative tasks.

Being an estate constable, it pains my heart daily to see what officers are faced with during our tour of duty. Many security officers are underpaid, are exposed to poor and unsafe working conditions, lack adequate safety gear, (proper bulletproof vests and arms), lack regular training, while risking their lives to put food on their tables by doing honest day work for basic minimum wages.

In many companies, officers are afraid to speak out due to fear of discrimination and victimization. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a lot of changes throughout the world, it made people start doing things differently while others learn to adapt to changes slowly but surely. However, many security companies have used the pandemic to bring about change and make rules as they go along, that are not necessarily in the interest of the workers. Persons lost their jobs due to some organizations going out of business, and some workers' hours of work were significantly reduced, making it increasingly difficult for them to put food on the table.

It is my honest opinion that these companies made changes to suit them, as I look around, I am seeing that some companies profited from the pandemic, while other companies and workers recorded losses and increased hardships, including unemployment, and reduced pay. We have to take a look at these occurrences as they affect the level of survivability of many of our workers, including security officers in Trinidad and Tobago. A question I ask myself is..."is it right that estate constables are risking their lives daily for \$21.00-\$23.00 an hour, while these companies are getting

paid \$65.00-\$70.00 or more an hour by their clients?

We are living in a society now where many average people are living from pay-cheque to pay-cheque. People are finding it very difficult to save money and maintain their standards of living that existed before the pandemic. The cost of living is getting very ridiculous and most people tend to hold down their jobs so they can simply put food on their table and pay some bills. Along with these issues, is the fact that the crime rate in this country is rising rapidly and getting out of hand; and in many cases the estate constables are losing their lives by doing an honest day job. What protection is there for these officers? What are the steps that the government of Trinidad and Tobago can take to better the plight of these workers? What is the role of the estate police association of Trinidad and Tobago in relation to improving the plight of these officers?

Many private security companies believe that there is no standard salary for estate officers, so there is a large disparity in pay depending on which firm is recruiting. We are coming to the end of 2022 and no one is focusing on estate constables, and their situation in any serious way. I read sometimes that the Estate Police Association says there is a "crisis of disenchantment" in the private security sector as a result of oppressive laws and the institution. President Deryck Richardson made this statement and he also mentioned that the industry is low paying and has no provisions for annual sick leave and other benefits for private security officers. What is happening to this profession? How do we fix this?

It's about time we as estate constables stand up and fight for what we deserve. Are we serious in this country about going forward, what do we want for our children and our children's children?

We as officers have to protect ourselves going forward, as is said, 'safety is our #1 priority'. Be vigilant, respectful, law-abiding, and maintain integrity. We have to demand fair play and fair pay because we are not

being treated or compensated fairly. An intervention is needed as government and stakeholders must take serious steps in regulating the private security sector. As a woman estate constable, I see security as a profession, and it's about time that we are treated as one.

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