

On Human Rights

by Janet Jagan

A subject that is frequently discussed in Guyana is the issue of human rights. Earlier this month, the United Nations, on December 10th, observed International Human Rights Day. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, formulated three years after the establishment of the United Nations contains some 30 Articles that set out what are the rights of people all over the world.

The Declaration deals with the most fundamental of all rights, the right to life, liberty and security of person, but in this flawed world in which we live, in the 21st century, unbelievably, there are many who do not enjoy this fundamental right and are born slaves, passing that status to their children.

The Declaration covers many rights, including the right to marriage and the entitlement to equal rights to marriage, yet we learn from the media that many women in some countries in the world are forced into unwanted marriages, that many women have no

rights in marriage and we know that many women suffer domestic violence, even leading to murder, in marriage.

It is true that the United Nations has not achieved all its goals yet, but the promotion and explanations of the Declaration on Human Rights, on a continu-

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The Sunday Stabroek of December 21, 2008 contains a cartoon by P. Harris which shows a man being tied up like a mummy with President Jagdeo and Dr Luncheon doing the binding

of the man so he cannot speak or move, with the President saying "and let it not be said that we do not believe in the preservation of freedom of expression." And to the side is a coffin labeled "Linden." No doubt it refers to the fact that Linden has only one TV station with two channels. As far as I know, that has always been the case since the introduction of TV

in Guyana.

Does that mean the people of Linden are denied the right to freedom of opinion and expression and "to seek receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers...?"

Some of the media houses, both print and TV,



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their human rights. During the early period of the freedom struggles, the two or three newspapers and the single radio station carried practically nothing on what was actually going on. Letters to the press were never printed. Eventually, the Mirror was established to provide some information on the PPP in government in the 60's. Nothing positive about the PPP government was ever printed and the press helped in the agitation to bring down the government and prevent Independence from being granted while the PPP was in office. I can well remember a Chronicle front page headline to the effect that Cubans were

off shore, ready to invade the country and another, that there were hundreds of armed Cubans in Guyana when, there were in fact, two Cuban diplomats – no more.

Only *Mirror* was there to defend the sacking of three journalists after the 1973 elections, which they labelled as rigged. I can't recall any newspaper, except the *Mirror*, or any groups coming out openly and challenging and exposing the rigged elections – a basic denial of the rights of man. A number of people are coming forward to claim their place in fighting the PNC dictatorship. I don't recall any cartoon like the one in last Sunday's Stabroek News showing the denial of human rights by the PNC regime.

Now, the media can say and do what they want and they certainly do not keep their mouths shut! The humorous twist of all of this is that some of these forces who are complaining vigorously about denial of freedom of expression now were silent when these violations actually existed.