

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## Responses to Information Requests



Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

15 October 2013

### GUY104576.E

Guyana: Criminal violence and state response; state protection available for witnesses of crime (2010-September 2013)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

#### 1. Overview

Sources indicate that violent crime is a problem in Guyana (US 7 Apr. 2012; *Stabroek News* 21 July 2013; Canada 16 May 2013). Common types of crime in Guyana include:

- murder (US 7 Apr. 2012; *Stabroek News* 29 Mar. 2013);
- armed robbery (ibid.; US 7 Apr. 2012; Canada 16 May 2013)
- assault (ibid.)
- break-ins (ibid.)
- car-jackings (ibid.)
- trafficking in drugs (US 5 Mar. 2013; *Stabroek News* 21 July 2013; SAS 2012, 10)
- trafficking in guns (ibid.; *Stabroek News* 21 July 2013)
- banditry in the interior (Reuters 13 Dec. 2011; *Stabroek News* 29 Mar. 2013)
- and maritime piracy (ibid.; Canada 16 May 2013).

#### 2. Statistics

##### 2.1 2010 Statistics

According to the Guyana Bureau of Statistics, in 2010 there were: 140 murders; 7 manslaughter cases; 297 "wounding with intent" cases; 1903 burglary and breaking in offences; 357 larceny cases and 117 rape cases (Guyana 2011). According to a report by the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the homicide rate in 2010 was 18.4 per 100,000 people (UN 2011, 94, 101).

##### 2.2 2011 Statistics

Guyana media sources indicate that there were 130 murders in 2011 (*Kaieteur News* 8 Jan. 2013; *Stabroek News* 15 Mar. 2013). In addition, the Georgetown-based *Kaieteur News* states that there were 879 cases of armed robbery and a total of 3,823 cases of "serious crimes"(which include murder, armed robbery, larceny, burglary, rape, and kidnapping) (8 Jan. 2013). According to the 2013 homicide statistics table by the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the homicide rate in 2011 was 17.2 per 100,000 people (UN 2013).

##### 2.3 2012 Statistics

In 2012, there were reportedly 137 murders and 1,065 cases of armed robbery (*Stabroek News* 29 Mar. 2013; *Kaieteur News* 8 Jan. 2013). Of the 137 murders, 62 were categorized as "disorderly type," 11 were committed during armed robbery, 24 were domestic related, 9 were "execution type," and 31 were undetermined (*Stabroek News* 15 Mar. 2013; *Kaieteur News* 8 Jan. 2013). *Kaieteur News* reports that there were 3,777 cases of "serious crimes" (ibid.). The same source reports that armed robbery increased by 21 percent between 2011 and 2012, and that "larceny from the person," burglary, and breaking and entering and larceny decreased (ibid.).

##### 2.4 2013 Statistics

*Kaieteur News* indicates that in the period of January to May 2013, there were 51 murders, of which 23 were categorized as "disorderly type," 9 were committed during armed robberies, 1 was "execution type," 4 were domestic related, and 14 were undetermined (8 June 2013). During this time period there were reportedly 1,604 cases of "serious

crime" (*Kaieteur News* 8 June 2013). In comparison, during the same period in 2012, there were the same number of murders and 1,621 cases of "serious crime" (*ibid.*).

### 3. Areas of Crime

According to the Canadian government travel advisory for Guyana, areas with high crime in Guyana include Georgetown, the East Bank Demerara region, the New Amsterdam area, and the East Coast Demerara region--particularly Buxton, Lusignan, Friendship, and Annadale (Canada 16 May 2013). The US Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) indicates that robberies are particularly common in Georgetown and New Amsterdam (US 7 Apr. 2012).

Sources indicate that violent crime is particularly problematic in the interior regions (*ibid.*; *Stabroek News* 29 Mar. 2013). Media sources report that the high price of gold has caused a gold rush in the interior of Guyana, leading to increased killings and violence (Reuters 13 Dec. 2011; *The Guardian* 27 Sept. 2011). According to the Police Commissioner, as reported by *Stabroek News*, 24 of the 62 "disorderly murders" in 2012 occurred in gold mining areas in the interior (15 Mar. 2013). *Stabroek News* indicates that, in addition to logging and mining, this area has "gold and diamond smuggling, fuel smuggling, gun-running, narco-trafficking, and other contraband activities" (29 Mar. 2013). The UN Development Programme (UNDP), in a report about citizen security in the Caribbean, noted that indigenous communities in Guyana's interior are particularly insecure because of their remoteness, their lack of access to the criminal justice system, and the expansion of economic enterprises in their surroundings (UN 2012, 35). According to the Canadian government travel advisory for Guyana, gangs orchestrate attacks in the jungle area bordering Suriname (Canada 16 May 2013). The Small Arms Survey (SAS), a research project affiliated with the Geneva-based Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (SAS n.d.), noted that Guyana's unmonitored borders in the interior facilitate the transiting of drugs and weapons (SAS 2012, 10, 20).

According to Reuters, there is little police presence in the remote mining towns in the interior, leaving miners vulnerable to criminals (Reuters 13 Dec. 2011). *Stabroek News* indicates that Guyana does not have a security policy for the interior region (21 July 2013). However, the Police Commissioner reportedly indicated that the police have established checkpoints, patrols and "stop and search" operations to improve policing in the interior (*Stabroek News* 15 Mar. 2013).

### 4. Organized Crime, Trafficking of Drugs and Weapons, Gangs

According to the UNDP report, there are organized crime groups in Guyana, but little is known about the number of such groups or how many people are affiliated with such groups (UN 2012, 71). The same source indicates that the structure of Guyana's organized crime groups takes the form of "loosely organized networks that support the drug and gun trade" (*ibid.*, 73).

Sources indicate that Guyana is a transit country for cocaine originating in other South American countries and destined for countries in North America and elsewhere (US 5 Mar. 2013; Freedom House 2013; SAS 2012, 20). According to the US Department of State's 2013 *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR 2013)*, factors contributing to the transshipment of narcotics through Guyana include "poorly monitored ports, remote airstrips, intricate river networks, porous land borders and weak security sector capacity" (5 Mar. 2013). According to Freedom House, "counternarcotics efforts are undermined by corruption that reaches to high levels of the government" (2013).

Sources indicate that gun trafficking is a problem in Guyana (*Stabroek News* 21 July 2013; SAS 2012, 10, 21). According to SAS, the majority of guns in Guyana are smuggled in from Brazil through its large, unpatrolled border, and trafficked through Guyana using similar routes to the drug trade (*ibid.*, 21). Many of the guns are reportedly passed along to gang members or to other Caribbean criminal organizations that protect the drug trafficking networks, while some are sold to business owners for protection (*ibid.*).

According to several sources, guns are readily available to criminals in Guyana (US 7 Apr. 2012; *Stabroek News* 12 Sept. 2013; UN 2012, 22). According to the UNDP, easy access to guns, and their misuse, have increased deaths and injuries related to firearms (*ibid.*). US OSAC notes that handguns, knives and machetes are common weapons used by criminals in Guyana (US 7 Apr. 2012). Guyana media sources report that the police recovered 111 firearms in 2012 (*Kaieteur News* 8 Jan. 2013; *Stabroek News* 15 Mar. 2013).

Sources indicate that Guyana has a problem with criminal gangs (SAS 2012, 10; UN 2012, 68). According to a survey conducted by the UNDP, in 2010, 13.2 percent of people in Guyana said that there was a criminal gang problem in their neighbourhood, which was slightly higher than the average of 12.5 percent in the Caribbean region (*ibid.*). Of those that said there was a gang problem, 29.6 percent described it as a "big problem" and 65 percent said that the gang problem first appeared in their neighbourhoods within the last three years prior to the 2010 survey (*ibid.*, 68-69).

According to SAS, the high level of corruption in Guyana's state institutions is a factor contributing to organized crime and gang activity (2012, 35). Several sources corroborate that corruption is a problem in Guyana (IHS Global Insight 3 Jan. 2013; *Stabroek News* 12 Sept. 2013; US 19 Apr. 2013, 12). Using a scoring system of 1 to 100, in which 1 is most corrupt and 100 is least corrupt, Transparency International (TI) gave Guyana a score of 28, ranking it 133 of 178 countries in their *Corruptions Perception Index* (TI 2012). The US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012* states that the government of Guyana did not effectively implement laws prescribing criminal punishments for corruption (US 19 Apr. 2013, 12).

## 5. State Efforts to Combat Violent Crime

### 5.1 Government Initiatives

According to the *INCSR 2013*, Guyana's government has passed several pieces of legislation to enhance the capabilities of the law enforcement and judiciary to convict drug traffickers, such as the *Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Act of 2009*, the *Interception of Communications Bill* and the *Criminal Procedures Bill*, although as of 5 March 2013, the government has sought no prosecutions (US 5 Mar. 2013). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this response.

State authorities have reportedly established the Integrated Crime Information System, an electronic data-management system to connect police divisions and track criminal activities (*Stabroek News* 15 Mar. 2013; US 5 Mar. 2013).

According to *Stabroek News*, the government installed closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras in an effort to reduce crime, however there have not yet been any crimes solved as a result of the initiative (12 Sept. 2013). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this response.

### 5.2 Police

US OSAC describes police response to crime as "largely ineffective," noting that police responsiveness to emergencies is either slow (15 minutes or longer) or non-existent (US 7 Apr. 2012). The Canadian travel advisory notes emergency "response time may be delayed" and "assistance is limited" (Canada 16 May 2013).

In the 2010 UNDP survey, 41.6 percent of the people surveyed in Guyana said that the police were competent, which was the lowest figure among the seven English-speaking Caribbean countries surveyed (UN 2012, 111). Of respondents who were victims of violent crimes and reported them to the police, 35 percent of men and 23 percent of women were satisfied with the actions taken by the police (*ibid.*, 109).

Sources indicate that there are problems with police corruption and bribery (SAS 2012, 37; US 19 Apr. 2013, 12). According to SAS, officers are susceptible to corruption in part because the police force is under-staffed, poorly paid, and lacks institutional mechanisms for officers to voice their concerns (2012, 36-37). Some police officers are reportedly involved in criminal activities (US 7 Apr. 2012; SAS 2012, 37). SAS notes that some former police officers have turned to drug trafficking and are wanted in connection to execution-style murders (*ibid.*). According to US OSAC, "many" police officers assist, protect or are paid off by criminal elements (7 Apr. 2012).

*Stabroek News* reports that the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) wrote to the Police Commissioner in January 2013 complaining of "poor and inadequate" police work that has left several murders unsolved (*Stabroek News* 31 Mar. 2013). The DPP particularly noted long delays in the police sending files to the DPP for advice, and cited an example of a 2010 case, where officers overlooked evidence of a double murder, that was not sent to the DPP until three years later, and that remains unsolved (*ibid.*). According to the DPP, in the year prior to the March 2013 article, one police division did not charge any suspects in any of their cases (*ibid.*). The same source reports that the Ministry of Home Affairs has noted a "long list of unsolved serious crimes, including execution-type murders," and warned that the police force appears to "lack the ability or will" to solve high-profile cases" (*ibid.*).

Freedom House provided the following assessment of police efforts in Guyana:

Racial polarization has seriously eroded law enforcement, with many Indo-Guyanese complaining that they are victimized by Afro-Guyanese criminals and ignored by the predominantly Afro-Guyanese police. Meanwhile, many Afro-Guyanese claim that the police are manipulated by the government for its own purposes. Official inquiries have repeatedly called for improved investigative techniques, more funding, community-oriented policing, better disciplinary procedures, greater accountability, and a better ethnic balance in the police force, but the government has taken few concrete steps to implement the proposed reforms. (2013)

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this response.

According to IHS Global Insight, there are a series of police reforms scheduled to be carried out between 2013 and 2017, with a focus on "administration, public relations and communications, professionalism, and succession planning" (3 Jan. 2013).

#### 5.2.1 Police Shootings

Sources report that on 18 July 2012, police in the mining town of Linden fired at protestors who were demonstrating against the high cost of electricity, killing three people (Canadian Press 18 July 2012; CMC 1 Mar. 2013; US 19 Apr. 2013, 1) and injuring several more (*ibid.*; CMC 1 Mar. 2013). A commission of inquiry was reportedly established to investigate the incident (Guyana 2013; CMC 1 Mar. 2013; Freedom House 2013). The commission's final report found the police responsible for the killings (*ibid.*; Guyana 2013) but cleared the Minister of Home Affairs of blame (Freedom House 2013).

*Country Reports 2012* indicates that in 2012, the Police Complaints Authority received 14 complaints of unlawful killings by police officers (US 19 Apr. 2013, 1), while the *Guyana Times* indicates that they received 11 complaints of unlawful killings, among 264 written complaints against police officers (17 Mar. 2013).

### 5.3 Judiciary

Sources indicate that Guyana's judiciary has limited resources (US 7 Apr. 2012; Freedom House 2013). SAS describes the judiciary as "slow," "overburdened," and "under-staffed" (2012, 39). *Country Reports 2012* states that the "[d]elays and inefficiencies undermined judicial due process" (US 19 Apr. 2013, 6). In 2012, 14 cases were declined prosecution because they had been pending for more than 15 years and the witnesses were no longer able to testify (ibid., 7). The same source notes that judicial corruption is perceived to be a widespread problem (ibid., 12). The OSAC crime advisory notes that the judiciary is subject to threats and/or bribes and well-funded criminals often go free (ibid. 7 Apr. 2012).

### 6. Witness Protection

Information about Guyana's witness protection program was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. *Kaieteur News* noted that protective custody in Guyana is challenging because of Guyana's small size, lengthy wait period before trials, and limited resources to afford a high standard of comfort for witnesses (30 Sept. 2010b). The source observed that without restrictions on a protected person's movements and actions, it may be easy to track down the person's location (ibid.).

*Kaieteur News* reported on a 2010 sexual molestation case in which witnesses who were expected to testify in the case were held in protective custody by the police and kept under guard on a 24-hour basis (29 Sept. 2010). The same source indicates that some of the witnesses "escaped" from their holding location and claimed that they were being held in "hostage-like conditions," even though the police maintained that the witnesses were allowed to leave if they chose to (*Kaieteur News* 29 Sept. 2010). The young women who left were reportedly apprehended by the police and taken back into protective custody (ibid. 30 Sept. 2010a) and promised "improved conditions" (ibid. 29 Sept. 2010). *Kaieteur News* reported that witness protection in this case was eventually disbanded and the witnesses were released (ibid. 30 Sept. 2010a).

*Kaieteur News* also reports of a case in which a teenage former gang member who agreed to testify for the state against the Rondell 'Fine Man' Rawlins gang was being held in protective custody at a police station for nearly two years (30 Sept. 2010a). The same source said that the witness appeared satisfied with his protective custody arrangement (*Kaieteur News* 30 Sept. 2010a).

*Stabroek News* reports on a case in which the family of a murder victim called on the police to provide protection to the witness in the case (19 Jan. 2013). Information about actions taken by the police regarding witness protection in this case could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Statistics on the number of people, who received witness or victim protection from 2010 to 2013, could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Attempts to contact the following government offices were unsuccessful: Guyana – Bureau of Statistics, Commissioner of Police, Guyana High Commission in Ottawa, Ministry of Home Affairs.

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International; eci.net; Factiva; Guyana – Guyana Police Force, Ministry of Home Affairs; Human Rights Watch; United Nations – Refworld.

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