



**The Prime Minister
St. Vincent and the Grenadines
West Indies**

January 4, 2024

Your Excellencies

President Irfaan Ali of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana

and

President Nicolas Maduro of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Mr Dear Irfaan and Nicolas

Solidarity greetings to your respective governments and peoples from the government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I wish for all of our peoples in Latin America, the Caribbean, and indeed the world, a peaceful, secure, just, and prosperous 2024.

It has been drawn to my attention that a photograph, taken in December 2022, in which I appeared with other persons ostensibly showing a "papier-mâché" depiction of a map of Venezuela which, controversially, includes the Essequibo or part of it, has surfaced/resurfaced on social media.

I have been advised that the event at which this photograph was taken was one commemorating the life and work of the great Liberator, Simon Bolivar; the place was at Villa, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, on the grounds of the residence/office of the Chargé d'Affaires of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

I do not recall ever seeing this photograph before its current circulation. I am informed that photographs were being taken in front of flags of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Venezuela and a bust of Bolivar. While the photographs were being taken, I am advised that someone attached to the Venezuelan Embassy placed the "papier-mâché" depiction of the said map in front of us. I did not look at what the depiction was. I assumed that it was about Simon Bolivar.

It is unfortunate that this innocent inadvertence on my part has been used by some to drum up, unnecessarily, antipathy of one kind or another. I understand all the emotions attendant on this controversial issue; and from time-to-time there will be flare-ups. As always, though, we as leaders must maintain a patience and a calm knowing that sun brightens stone, even as the river burns. And there is "The Joint Declaration at Argyle for Dialogue and Peace Between Guyana and Venezuela" for all of us, especially both of you, to apply and build upon.

/2...

Tel: 784-456-1703 <> Fax: 784-457-2152

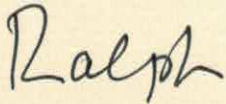
E-mail: pmosvg@vincysurf.com

I have spoken to my friends Irfaan and Bharat (Vice President Jagdeo) about this matter of the "papier-mâché" depiction; hopefully it has been laid to rest, where it ought properly to reside among the assorted ghosts from the past, which ought never to rule us from the grave.

Meanwhile, I am profoundly encouraged by the letter dated January 2, 2024 from the President of Guyana to the President of Venezuela in respect of arranging the first meeting of "The Joint Commission" in Brasilia to advance further "the Argyle Declaration" and its purposes.

All the best to each of you, your families, government and peoples.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ralph". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Dr. The Hon. Ralph E. Gonsalves
Prime Minister