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PR#276-26

PRESS RELEASE

Senior Justices of the Peace Sworn in to Strengthen Belize's Response to Domestic Violence

Belmopan, November 2, 2026.

Eighteen Select Senior Justices of the Peace were officially sworn in on Friday, October 30, 2026, at the Family Court in Belize City, marking an important step in strengthening access to emergency protection for persons experiencing domestic violence.

The swearing-in follows the introduction of the Justices of the Peace (Amendment) Act, 2025, which provides for specially designated Senior Justices of the Peace to issue Emergency Interim Protection Orders in circumstances where a magistrate is unavailable, including outside normal court hours and during emergencies.

For persons experiencing domestic violence, the need for protection does not always arise during regular working hours. This new arrangement helps address that gap by providing an additional avenue for urgent legal intervention when someone's safety may be at risk.

The newly sworn-in officers will be authorized to issue Interim Protection Orders for a period not exceeding 72 hours, providing temporary protection while the matter proceeds through the appropriate court.

Hon. Thea Garcia-Ramirez, Minister of Human Development, Family Support and Gender Affairs, emphasized the importance of ensuring that the justice system remains accessible and responsive to those seeking protection.

"When someone reaches out for help, there must be a system capable of responding," the Minister stated.

Minister Garcia-Ramirez also reminded those present that domestic violence is not simply a matter of statistics or legislation. Behind every reported case is a person, a family, or a child whose safety and well-being may be at risk.

She encouraged the newly appointed Select Senior Justices of the Peace to approach their responsibilities with sensitivity, fairness, and respect, recognizing that individuals seeking protection may already have endured significant trauma.

The Minister further emphasized that protecting survivors requires cooperation among the Judiciary, law enforcement, government ministries, and other agencies responsible for assisting. While legal protection is essential, it must also be supported by services that respond to the wider needs of individuals and families affected by violence.

The 18 newly sworn-in Select Senior Justices of the Peace are:

1. Adrian Madrid
2. Amelio Miguel Cal Jr.
3. Ayonie Briceno
4. Barrette Johnissa Belisle
5. Desol Neal
6. Francisca Guillerma Villamor
7. Giovanni Noel Tillett
8. Ion Anthony Cacho
9. Irene Sandra Cruz
10. Javier Antonio Williams
11. Jennifer Wright Braun
12. Maria Marina Tucker
13. Marie Lavern Tzul
14. Moses Martinez
15. Orlando Espat
16. Percival Willington Neal
17. Robert Mossiah
18. Thomas George Morrison

The swearing-in builds on earlier specialized training designed to prepare the selected officers for their new responsibilities, including the legal procedures governing emergency orders, confidentiality, record-keeping, and working with vulnerable persons.

The Ministry of Human Development, Family Support and Gender Affairs welcomes this development as part of the wider national effort to strengthen Belize's response to domestic violence.

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