

**IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BELIZE A.D. 2024  
(CRIMINAL SESSION)**

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE**

**INDICTMENT NO. Amended C80 of 2024**

**BETWEEN:**

**THE KING**

**v.**

**JAIRO AMADOR**

**BEFORE Honourable Mr. Justice Derick F. Sylvester**

**APPEARANCES:** Ms. Shanell Fernandez – Counsel for the Crown  
Mr. Norman Rodriguez – Counsel for the Accused

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2024: 25<sup>th</sup> November

9<sup>th</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> December

2025: 20<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> January

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**JUDGMENT ON SENTENCING**

[1] **SYLVESTER, J:** The accused was indicted by the Director of Public Prosecutions on an indictment for the offence of Extortion, for that, **JAIRO AMADOR** on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of October, 2022, at Hattieville Village, in the Belize District of the High Court, under the cover of his office as a police constable in the Belize Police Department, obtained from Ann Savard, the sum of USD\$100.00, which he knew he was not lawfully authorized to obtain.

[2] The accused's trial proceeded before a jury pursuant to the provisions

of section 65 of the *Indictable Procedure Act*.

- [3] On the 31<sup>st</sup> day of October 2024, the accused was found guilty by a jury of his peers and fell to be sentenced by this Court. The Court ordered the provision of the following reports to aid in sentencing, namely, Social Inquiry, Psychological and Psychiatric. The Court is in receipt of the Social Inquiry Report; however, the Psychological and Psychiatric reports remain pending, and both the defence and prosecution agreed to waive its production and proceed without them. The court therefore proceeded to sentence the accused.
- [4] On the 21<sup>st</sup> day of January 2025, the accused was due to be sentenced. However, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of January 2025, General Sentencing Guidelines were passed by Practice Direction # 4 of 2025, pursuant to the Powers of the Rules Committee under section 101 (1) of the Senior Courts Act, No. 27 of 2022 of the Substantive Laws of Belize. The accused therefore is the first person to be sentenced by this Court, in accordance with the Sentencing Guidelines.
- [5] This court will compartmentalize this judgment in the following manner:
- (1) The Legal Framework.
  - (2) Testimony of the witnesses.
  - (3) Principles of sentencing.
  - (4) Sentences for like offences
  - (5) Sentencing guidelines.
  - (6) Conclusion

### **PART 1: The Legal Framework**

- [6] The accused was indicted pursuant to section 284(1), read along with section 310, of the Criminal Code, Chapter 101 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020:

*“ 284.-(1) Every public officer or juror who is guilty of corruption or of willful oppression or of extortion in respect of the duties of his office, shall be liable to imprisonment for three years.;*

*310. A public officer is guilty of extortion who under cover of his office demands or obtains from any person whether for public purposes or for himself or any other person, any money or valuable consideration which he knows that he is not lawfully authorised to demand or obtain, or at a time at which he knows that he is not lawfully authorised to demand it.”*

**PART 2:**

**Testimony: Ann Savard’s/ Michael Bandick’s/ Inspector Mark Bernardez and Sgt Leon Ferguson.**

[7] **Ann Savard’s** evidence was that she is a Canadian citizen, who arrived in Belize three days prior, with her husband and they had purchased a home in Belize. On the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024, they rented a Black Ford Expedition, and was *en route* to Placencia. She was stopped at a Vehicle Check Point (VCP) in Hattieville. She described the officer’s uniform by colour, being a khaki shirt with a dark pants and blue stripe. She informed the officer that the vehicle was a rental, after she was informed the vehicle’s insurance had expired. She was denied a phone call to dial the rental company from whom the vehicle was rented. In her evidence she stated the following:

*I. “He ask me to exit the vehicle and follow him, and he led me to a small yellow building on the side of the road. He went inside and I followed him, and he sat down and I sat across from him and he continued to tell me that I could go to jail, driving with no insurance. I could be arrested. At this point I was terrified, in tears and shaking. And then he said I can make it go away if you give me a donation.”*

II. *Next my husband came into the booth. There was another police officer trying to keep my husband from coming into the booth. He was keeping my husband from getting into the booth and my husband was trying to get away from him and got into the booth and asked what is going on here and I said he told me I was about to be arrested but he can make it go away if I gave him a donation. My husband said a donation for what your steak dinner. My husband asked him how much money he wanted and he would not give us a number, he said it's up to you how much. So I asked my husband how much we should give him and my husband looked at him and said would a hundred dollars work and he shrugged his shoulders and I took one hundred dollars US bill and I handed it to the officer, and he put it in his pocket. He gave me my Driver's licence back and said we could go.*

III. *I was terrified and crying, when he took me into the booth. I was terrified and crying.”*

[8] Michael Bandick's evidence stated that he was driving behind his wife's vehicle (Ann Savard) when she was pulled over at a Vehicle Check Point (VCP), he stopped behind, exited his vehicle. In sum he stated as follows:

I. *“My name is Michael Robert Bandick, retired. I am Canadian. On the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022, I recall that day. At approximately 10:30am, I recall the date and time. We were pulled over, my wife Ann Savard and I. She was pulled over I was following her. She was pulled over at the Hattieville Police Check. There is a sign on the road, “Police Check”. There were two officers there. They were police officers dressed like that fellow. (points to court officer in beige shirt and blue pants).*

II. *I pulled up at the check behind my wife, and the officer said the insurance on the car expired and she could be or would be arrested and go to jail as the insurance had expired. He was showing us the expired sticker on the*

vehicle. We have been in Belize for three days, so we didn't know that is where they put the sticker on the vehicle.

- III. *The police officer pulled her over, one of the officers. The other officer was checking another vehicle. He took her licence and ask her to go into a check room an 8x8 building, a small yellow building with a single door. At that time the other younger officer came up to me to try to detain me from following them there. He had to go and do his job in traffic so I proceeded to the building and I asked my wife what was going on, she was crying and shaking, pretty upset, having been in the country for only three [3] days. She was crying, and she said they will put her in jail, and I asked exactly what is going on, and he said he can make this all this go away for a donation. I said to him, for your steak dinner tonight, and what do you expect. I was mad and frustrated.*
- IV. *I asked him how much. He said he cannot say it is up to me, and shrugged, and I just gave him 100 dollars. I gave him 100 dollars and I didn't want my wife go to jail and probably won't be released until after the weekend. And after that, the vehicle did have insurance on it, it just didn't have the sticker but the officer refused to let me call them. The officer refused to let me call the insurance company. I told him I can call the insurance company to verify or straighten this out and he said no that doesn't matter, as if to say the crime is already committed.*
- V. *My wife looked at me and said Belize or American and I said American. After he got the money, he said we are free to go. We proceeded to our vehicle and went to the rental car company. And I went to the car company guy and said we are in trouble. The whole fleet of vehicles didn't get their stickers on that is how he explained it."*

### Inspector Mark Bernardez (Accused Oral Confession)

[9] The evidence of officer Mark Barnardez was that the accused orally confessed to receiving the USD 100.00. He stated he was the one who dealt with these persons, and he took USD 100.00 from them, because they were driving an uninsured motor vehicle and he let them go.

i. “.....I had a brief talk with PC Amador, I told PC Amador that the information we received is genuine and it is wrong what they are doing. Shortly after PC Amador, uttered the following words:

‘Officer I was the one that dealt with these persons, and I took 100 dollars USD currency from them because they were driving an uninsured motor vehicle and I let them go’.

ii. I did not say anything to him before he said that. The procedure is to first caution the individual then we go step by step with whatever information. I did not inform PC Amador of anything before he gave me the statement. Thereafter, I detained him for the crime of extortion, and I once again cautioned him in the following words:

You are not obliged to say anything but what you say will be taken down in writing and may be given in evidence.....”.

ii. After PC Amador told me he was the one who dealt with those individuals he then put his hand on his gun holster and his hand on his waist, and in a small compartment on the gun holster he took out the 100 USD currency, which I believe to have been difficult to locate whilst CPL Ferguson was conducting the search on him. I informed CPL Ferguson of what transpired, and PC Amador should be detained for extortion.”

[10] Inspector Bernardez then informed him that the USD 100.00 note was retrieved and passed to Sgt Leon Ferguson who packaged it, recorded the serial number as **KL02 599806B**, and it was tendered into evidence at trial and marked as an exhibit.

## **SGT 1270 Leon Ferguson**

[11] Finally, Sgt Leon Ferguson recorded the statement from the accused, which was tendered into evidence unchallenged by the defence. The crux of the statement was that he was working at the Vehicle Check Point (VCP) on the material date in question, and he gave Inspector Bernardez a USD 100.00 dollar note. When asked how he came into possession of the USD 100.00 dollars he made no comment at (Q. 19). When pressed further (Q. 21), he stated thus:

“When I gone to piss at the lamp post, it was thrown into the bush, not on the bush in the grass.”

Q. 22 Who threw the \$100.00 US currency?

Ans. I have no idea, when I gone piss it was already there.

Q.23 Did you ask who the \$100.00 USD belong to?

Ans: Nope.

[12] It is on the above evidence that the Accused was convicted unanimously by a nine-member jury panel.

## **PART 3: Principles of Sentencing**

[13] This court is reminded of its tremendous responsibility when embarking upon the sentencing of an accused. The Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) in its seminal decision of **Pompey v. DPP**<sup>1</sup>, President of the CCJ Adrian Saunders opined as follows:

“Sentencing is one of the most challenging aspects of a judge's functions. It is a tremendous responsibility vested in a judge that no one else in society may lawfully undertake. This awesome duty is often discharged in the face of impassioned expectations of victims and convicted persons alike, their respective families and friends

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<sup>1</sup> [2020] CCJ 7 (AJ) GY

and, of course, the public and the Press. A dis-service is done to trial judges when there are no guidelines to aid the exercise of their vast sentencing discretion.”

[14] Further, in the CCJ’s decision of **Calvin Ramcharran v. DPP**<sup>2</sup>, Barrow JCCJ at par. 15 adopting Jamadar’s JCCJ approach stated that a sentencer should be alert to the societal, cultural and geographic factors, and be wary of importing wholesale sentencing decisions from other jurisdictions. This approach is wholly accepted by this Court. The principle is stated thus:

“(15) In affirming the deference an appellate court must give to sentencing judges, Jamadar JCCJ observed that sentencing is quintessentially contextual, geographic, cultural, empirical, and pragmatic. Caribbean Courts should therefore be wary about importing sentencing outcomes from other jurisdictions whose socio-legal and penal systems and cultures are quite distinct and differently developed and organised from those in the Caribbean.”

[15] Further, this court takes judicial notice and obedience to the CCJ’s decision in Ramcharran, per Barrow JCCJ, on the issue of the objective of sentencing, and states as follows:

“(16) *Jamadar JCCJ noted that in 2014 this Court explained the multiple ideological aims of sentencing. These objectives may be summarised as being: (i) the public interest, in not only punishing, but also in preventing crime (‘as first and foremost’ and as overarching), (ii) the retributive or denunciatory (punitive), (iii) the deterrent, in relation to both potential offenders and the particular offender being sentenced, (iv) the preventative, aimed at the particular offender, and (v) the rehabilitative, aimed at rehabilitation of the particular offender with a view to re-integration as a law abiding member of society.*

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<sup>2</sup> [2022] CCJ 4 (AJ) (GY)



[18]... to find the appropriate starting point in the sentencing exercise one needed to look to the body of relevant precedents, and to any guideline cases (usually from the territorial court of appeal).”

#### **PART 4: Sentences for like offences: High Court and Court of appeal (Belize)**

[16] This Court found useful guidance from the following authorities, namely; the Court of Appeal authority of **Marlon Harris v The Queen**<sup>3</sup>, wherein the accused who was police officer, after being found guilty of extorting One Hundred Dollars, was sentenced to pay a fine of \$10,000.00 within a specified time, in default of which he was ordered to serve a term of imprisonment for one year.

[17] The factual matrix of the case at Bar, was such that the virtual complainant was driving a motor vehicle with expired insurance. In exchange for not charging her, the accused used the cover of his office as a police constable in the Belize Police Department to extort the sum of One Hundred Dollars, which he knew he was not lawfully authorized to obtain.

[18] Further in the authority of the **Queen v Arden Jones**<sup>4</sup>, the accused was found guilty of extorting the sum of Three Hundred Dollars (\$300.00) from the virtual complainant in exchange for not charging and impounding her vehicle due to an insurance offence. The accused was found guilty of extortion and sentenced to pay a fine of Seven Thousand Five Hundred Dollars.

[19] In this matter, the accused being a police officer, was entrusted with the responsibility to protect and serve the citizenry. It is a disgrace to the police department, the public who are being served, and the sacred Oath taken by the accused upon his induction into the Honourable profession of policing. This behavior must attract condign consequences, since it betrays the public's trust and brings the

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<sup>3</sup> Criminal Appeal No. 3 of 2010

<sup>4</sup> Indictment No. 38 of 2018.

complete police department into utter disrepute. Thus, I accept the pronouncement of my Learned Brother Cumberbatch J, in Arden Jones, which is most apt to this matter, and I adopt his sentiments in toto as follows:

*“His (the accused) quest for filthy lucre seems to have caused him to ignore and forget the obligations trust upon him when he chose to become a member of the Belize Police Department and wear its uniform. This conduct inevitably causes disrespect and disregard for law enforcement officers in this country.*

*The Accused must be suitably punished for this infraction. I have already found that the aggravating factors outweigh the mitigating ones and as such a custodial sentence is usually inevitable.”*

#### **PART 5: Sentencing Guidelines (Dishonesty)**

[20] This court is guided by the principle that the first and foremost principle of sentencing is the public interest in punishing and preventing crime<sup>5</sup>, further the public interest is overarching. **The Sentencing Guidelines 2025**, at part 3.3 states, the objectives of sentencing for consideration in the sentencing process are retribution, deterrence, prevention and rehabilitation.

[21] The above principles were judicially recognized by Sir Dennis Byron, Chief Justice, as he then was, in **Desmond Baptiste v The Queen**, and applied and followed in **Akim Monah v. Queen**<sup>6</sup> at paras. 44 as follows:

“(44) .....it is the law that in all sentencing cases, the Judge should advert to the relevant principles. These include the following principles: retribution, deterrence, prevention and rehabilitation as

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<sup>5</sup> Sentencing Guidelines 2025 [Belize part. [3.4- 3.7]  
Lashley v. Singh [2014] CCJ 11 p. 32 & Pompey v State [2020] CCJ 7 p. 52  
<sup>6</sup> GDAHCRAP2021/0015 (Formerly GDAHCRAP2014/0002) par. 44

referred to above. Sir Dennis Byron, Chief Justice, as he then was, had cause to address these principles in **Desmond Baptiste v The Queen** and it is apposite to reproduce them, as I hereby do:

### **Retribution**

Retribution at first glance tends to reflect the Old Testament biblical concept of an eye for an eye, which is no longer tenable in law. It is rather a ..... reflection of society's intolerance for criminal conduct. Lawton LJ stated at page 77 that: "*Society through the courts, must show its abhorrence of particular types of crimes, and the only way the courts can show this is by the sentences they pass.*"

### **Deterrence**

Deterrence is general as well as specific in nature. The former is intended to be a restraint against potential criminal activity by others whereas the latter is a restraint against the particular criminal relapsing into recidivist behaviour. Of what value however are sentences that are grounded in deterrence? Specific deterrence may be an ineffective tool to combat criminal behaviour that is spontaneous or spawned by circumstances such as addictions or necessity. Drug and alcohol addiction as well as need may trigger high rates of recidivism. Experience shows that general deterrence too is of limited effect. These sentences tend to lose their potency with the passage of time.

### **Prevention**

The goal here is to protect society from those who persist in high rates of criminality. For some offenders, the sound of the shutting iron cell door may have a deterrent effect. Some however never learn lessons from their incarcerations and the only way of curbing

their criminality is through protracted sentences whose objective is to keep them away from society. Such sentences are more suitable for repeat offenders.

### **Rehabilitation**

Here the objective is to engage the prisoner in activities that would assist him with reintegration into society after prison. However, the success of this aspect of sentencing is influenced by executive policy. Furthermore, rehabilitation has in the past borne mixed results. Of course, sentencing ought not to be influenced by executive policy such as the availability of structured activities to facilitate reform.”

- [22] In relation to the issue of retribution this court accepts, as stated prior that the conduct of the accused must be denounced, and the courts must reflect its abhorrence to the accused conduct. The accused has no prior conviction and the Social Inquiry Report, through the interviewees all spoke glowingly of the accused, as a father, and one who suffered dire financial pressures at a young age which caused him to leave school in form two, However, he worked and was able to finance his high school education to the level of form two<sup>7</sup>.
- [23] The accused was dismissed from the police force after being charged with this offence. He no longer poses a threat to the police department, but this offence will leave a continuing stain on the department. On the issue of deterrence, the object of sentencing will be to deter other police officers from following the path of the accused.
- [24] On the issue of prevention, the court’s view is that the accused would not be a danger to society or be likely to reoffend. The Social Inquiry Report stated the

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<sup>77</sup> Social Inquiry report (unnumbered) page 3 – last paragraph

accused has no prior convictions, a family man who cared for his family dutifully, including his daughter. The report concludes with the following sentence:

“Mr. Amador appears to display a very polite demeanor not relating to that of a criminal mindset.”

- [25] In relation to the rehabilitation of the Accused, the incident was isolated and not a pattern based on the evidence. The Accused was on bail since the offence was committed on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of October 2022 and has not reoffended. He was also gainfully employed, prior to being remanded post his conviction. The Accused has spent forty-five (45) days at the Kolbe foundation (prison) in Belize.

**Constructing the sentence, fixing the starting point (circumstances relevant to the offence and the offender).**

**Constructing the Sentence:**

- [26] In this jurisdiction the court is called upon to fix the starting point taking into consideration the aggravating and mitigating circumstances relevant to the offence. This court is guided by the CCJ’s authority of **Teerath Persaud v R**<sup>8</sup> per Anderson JCCJ on the issue of the formulation of a just sentence as follows:

“[46] Fixing the starting point is not a mathematical exercise; it is rather an exercise aimed at seeking consistency in sentencing and avoidance of the imposition of arbitrary sentences. Arbitrary sentences undermine the integrity of the justice system. In striving for consistency, there is much merit in determining **the starting point** with reference to the particular offence, which is under consideration, bearing in mind the comparison with other types of offending, taking into account the **mitigating and aggravating factors that are relevant to the offence but excluding the mitigating and aggravating factors that relate to the offender.** Instead of **considering all possible aggravating and mitigating factors only those**

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<sup>8</sup> (2018) 93 WIR 132.

concerned with the objective seriousness and characteristics of the offence are factored into calculating the starting point. Once the starting point has been so identified the principle of individualized sentencing and proportionality as reflected in the Penal System Reform Act is upheld by taking into account the aggravating and mitigating circumstances particular (or peculiar) to the offender and the appropriate adjustment upwards or downwards can thus be made to the starting point. Where appropriate there should then be a discount for a guilty plea. In accordance with the decision of this court in **R v Da Costa Hall** full credit for the period spent in pre-trial custody is then to be made and the resulting sentence imposed.”

[27] The above methodology was adopted by the Court of Appeal, in the matter of **Tyron Reid v. King**<sup>9</sup> at par. 7-8 as per Bulkan JA thus:

“(7) The methodology to be adopted for this process was set out in detail in *Teerath Persaud v the Queen*. Writing for the Court, Anderson JCCJ indicated that the sentencing court should fix a starting point with reference to the particular offence under consideration, and thereafter adjust the sentence upwards or downwards according to the aggravating and mitigating circumstances particular to the offender. In calculating the starting point, Anderson JCCJ said that instead of considering all possible aggravating and mitigating factors, only those concerned with the objective seriousness and characteristics of the offence should be taken into account. Other cases have provided examples of the types of factors bearing upon the seriousness of the offence – such as whether it involves violence, the manner of its commission (whether premeditated, highly organised; involving more than one participant), the specific role played by the offender, and importantly, its prevalence in society.

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<sup>9</sup> COA No. 3 of 2022

- (8) Once the starting point has been identified, the sentencing court is then required to take into account the circumstances peculiar to the offender. These cover such aspects as the offender's antecedents – age, character and other relevant circumstances – along with any expression of remorse, including a guilty plea and/or cooperation with law enforcement. Also important is the impact on the victim, including whether any violation of trust is involved. Finally, the offender's conduct in mitigation is important, including the form that it takes, which could range from an apology to material reparation. Finally, full credit must be given to the period spent in pre-trial custody, after which the remainder constitutes the sentence to be imposed.”

#### **Fixing the starting point: Mitigating and aggravating factors [offence]**

[28] **The Sentencing Guidelines 2025 ss. 5 and 6** prescribe the sentencing methodology when fixing the starting point, by taking into consideration the aggravating and mitigating circumstances relevant to the offence, as already alluded to above in the CCJ's decision of **Teerath Persaud v R**<sup>10</sup>. Despite the fact that the guidelines do not specifically address the offence of extortion, it covers the offence of dishonesty, wherein extortion will fall under this rubric.

[29] The Court therefore is duty bound to examine the aggravating and mitigating factors of the offence by ensuring the factors do not overlap into the offence for which the Accused was already charged, thereby avoiding double counting.

#### **Aggravating and Mitigating factors of the offence/starting point:**

[30] The Court will now determine the aggravating and mitigating features of the offence.

[31] The aggravating and mitigating factors of the offence can be subsumed in four (4)

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<sup>10</sup> (2018) 93 WIR 132.

broad categories as follows:

### **AGGRAVATING FACTORS: [OFFENCE]**

#### **Aggravating**

- a. Use of public office and breach of the public trust/ Loss of confidence in the Belize Police Department caused by the offence.
- b. Threats, emotional distress and inconvenience to the victim;
- c. Planning and premeditation evidenced by the accused taking the VC into the police booth to extort from her;

### **MITIGATING FACTORS (OFFENCE)**

- a. The delay in this matter, being in excess of two years for the trial to commence, is considered a mitigating factor. The accused waited over two [2] to know his fate. The CCJ Academy of Law: **Needham's Point Declaration on Criminal Justice Reform: Achieving a Modern Criminal Justice System**, Article 19 states that the ideal is to have indictable offences completed within twelve months, but during the transitional stage two (2) to three (3) years. The ideal must start today, lest the Court is stymied in a period of transition.

[32] The court finds that the aggravating factors outweigh the mitigating factor, and an appropriate starting point is necessary.

#### **Starting Point**

[33] The maximum penalty for this offence under the law is three (3) years imprisonment. The court will therefore impose a starting point of nine (9) months after examining the aggravating and mitigating factors relevant to the offence.



[34] The court will now individualize the sentence considering the mitigating and aggravating factors relevant to **the offender**.

**Aggravating Factors of the Offender:**

[35] Aggravating circumstances relevant to the offender:

- a. Attempts to conceal the USD 100.00.
- b. Accused a police officer and upholder of the law.

[36] Mitigating factor relevant to the Offender:

**Mitigating factors of the offender**

- i. Clean criminal record/no prior criminal history.
- ii. The accused is now a contributing member of society, gainfully employed.
- iii. The accused is a family man with a daughter.
- iv. Remorse.

[37] The mitigating factors outweigh the aggravating factors of the offending. Therefore, the sentence will be reduced from nine months to time served with other attendant conditions. The accused having spent forty-five (45) days awaiting sentence, the court will therefore impose no further custodial sentence, on the accused.

**Social Inquiry/ Report/Character witnesses**

[38] This Court is aware that the Accused has indicated through his character witnesses, that he was a citizen of prior good character. The court was apprised that upon the accused's release from prison he remained a productive member of the Belizean society, with his family who depend on him for support.

## Remorse

[39] Further, the accused has expressed remorse for what has transpired, and I have no doubt that this incident had, and will continue to have a dire effect on the life of the accused. This incident will also negatively impact his family.

## Part 6: Conclusion (Sentence)

[40] The sentence of the Court is as follows:

- i. The accused is sentenced to forty-five (45) days in prison, which is the time already spent, awaiting sentence.
- ii. The Court orders the sum of USD 100.00 to be returned to the virtual complainant Ann Savard.
- iii. The accused is fined the sum of \$2,500.00 to be paid within twelve (12) months of today's date, in default twelve (12) months imprisonment.

## Post Script:

Both the prosecution and defence are encouraged to utilize the criminal procedure (plea discussion and plea agreement) Act, 2024. Its effective implementation by both parties will ensure the backlogs are eliminated in short order. The continuous reliance on the adversarial approach to criminal proceedings will result in a retrograde step, a direction that must be abhorred. **The CCJ Academy of Law: Needham's Point Declaration on Criminal Justice Reform: Achieving a Modern Criminal Justice System**, part 34 exemplifies the above position as follows:

*"34. That courts should adopt a focused and integrated approach to eliminate criminal case backlogs, by using tools and measures such as robust case-management, coupled with plea bargaining discussions".*

In this matter, the Court encouraged the parties to utilize the above-mentioned legislation, and they were given numerous opportunities to engage in plea discussions, all to no avail. It is the Court's fervent hope that this practice shall immediately change course, so that the *raison d'etre* of the legislation and the Academy's declaration shall be utilized for the benefit of the citizens of Belize, and ultimately the administration of justice.

Dated this 24th day of January 2025.

**Honourable Justice Derick F. Sylvester  
Justice of the Supreme Court  
Belize Central District**