

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Tourist Assault in Christiansted Renews Concern Over Mental Illness, Homelessness, and Public Safety

After a tourist was allegedly struck with a pipe in Christiansted, the accused man was ordered to undergo evaluation, as a St. Croix resident said the incident reflects a growing crisis tied to homelessness, untreated mental illness and public safety.

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VIPD has not yet released a mugshot of the suspect. This story will be updated if one is provided.

ST. CROIX — An assault case in Christiansted involving an off-island visitor has reignited concern on St. Croix about public safety, untreated mental illness, and

homelessness, after a man accused of striking a tourist with a pipe was ordered to undergo psychological and psychiatric evaluation.

Kaleem Fraites appeared before Magistrate Yolan Brow Ross on Wednesday, where the court granted his attorney's oral motion for a mental health evaluation. Pending the outcome of that report, he is expected to return to court on June 3.

The case stems from an incident reported just before noon Tuesday. Police went to the Juan F. Luis Hospital to meet with a man who said he had been assaulted.

According to police, the man told officers that he and his girlfriend were walking along the road at Basin Triangle, near the Ancilmo Marshall Command police station, when they saw Fraites approaching. He was reportedly holding two pipes and swinging one of them over his head.

The man's girlfriend told police that she had been walking in front and turned back after Fraites passed her, only to see him hit her boyfriend with one of the pipes. She said he then walked away laughing as the man fell to the ground.

A passer-by who witnessed the incident called the 911 Emergency Call Center and reported that a vagrant had struck a tourist in the neck with a pipe.

Police said Fraites was found and detained shortly afterward. Officers reported finding two lengths of PVC piping and a piece of wooden stick in front of him. One of the pipes, police said, had been reinforced with another piece of wooden stick inside it.

According to police, Fraites said he found the items in the trash and picked them up. Although he denied hitting a pedestrian, he was arrested and charged with third-degree assault and disturbance of the peace. He was remanded into custody.

The incident also prompted a public response from St. Croix resident Yahaira Sanchez-Franco, who said the victims were guests visiting her from off-island and had been in Christiansted to enjoy St. Croix.

In a Facebook post Tuesday, Sanchez-Franco said the incident exposed what she described as a growing and dangerous problem the community has been avoiding.

"I'm sharing it because we have a real problem on St. Croix that we keep tiptoeing around—homelessness paired with untreated mental-health issues—and it's reaching a breaking point," she wrote.

Sanchez-Franco said her intent was not to spread fear, shame anyone, or suggest violence was something new. Instead, she said the assault reflected failures in systems meant to protect both the public and those in need of care.

"This isn't about blaming people who are struggling. This is about the lack of systems, resources, and follow-through to protect everyone—including those who need help the most," she wrote. "Ignoring it isn't compassionate. Waiting until someone gets seriously hurt isn't compassion."

She also described the issue as one requiring honesty, accountability, and a more serious commitment to solutions.

“This island is our home. We are proud, loving, resilient people. But loving your home also means being honest when something isn’t right and asking for better—from leadership, from services, and from ourselves,” Sanchez-Franco wrote.

She said she hoped the incident would lead to “real conversation, real solutions, and real action,” warning that what happened to her guest could happen to anyone.

For now, the criminal case against Fraites will remain pending until the court receives the results of his psychological and psychiatric evaluation.