

The Virgin Islands Consortium

As Fahie Demands His Release on Claim of Diplomatic Immunity, BVI Opposition Party Says He Should Immediately Resign

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BVI Premier Andrew Fahie

BVI Premier Andrew Fahie has demanded his release on the basis of diplomatic immunity, a principle of international law that provides foreign diplomats with a degree of protection from criminal or civil prosecution under the laws of the countries hosting them.

Fahie was arrested on Thursday in Miami on charges related to conspiracy to import cocaine and money laundering. However, in a Monday filing the beleaguered premier argued that because he is the elected, constitutional head of the government of the

British Virgin Islands, he is immune from prosecution on the cocaine-smuggling charges.

Meanwhile in the BVI, Leader of the Opposition Marlon Penn wants to know why is Fahie still the Premier of the British Virgin Islands.

Although the local executive government hangs in the balance, Penn is calling on Acting Premier Natalio Wheatley to denounce the alleged actions of the Premier, and for Fahie himself to “resign out of respect for the people of the Virgin Islands and in recognition of the need for the Territory to move forward.”

Penn said that he opened discussions with Wheatley on the issue as soon as he learned that official charges had been filed against Fahie and Oleanvine Maynard, head of the BVI Port Authority. Three days after their arrests on drug smuggling and money laundering conspiracy charges, he lamented that the government had not officially distanced themselves from the Premier, given the “undesirable global attention” brought by Fahie’s detention.

Apart from the Premier, Penn called on any other public official who knows themselves to have violated the public trust to voluntarily step down out of respect for BVI citizens and residents. “The majority of Virgin Islanders are a people of integrity and respect the laws of the Territory. These reprehensible actions by a distinct minority are in no way representative of the views and actions of the people of the Virgin Islands...violators of the public trust do not enjoy our individual and collective support. Our aim now is to support actions that will ensure good governance and move swiftly to restore public confidence.”

Following Fahie’s arrest, the recently-concluded Commission of Inquiry’s report to Governor John Rankin was published. Some have said that the Premier’s current legal woes, although the Governor was at pains to say are not related to the Commission’s report, only strengthen the report’s recommendation that the BVI return to direct rule temporarily while broken governance structures are repaired.