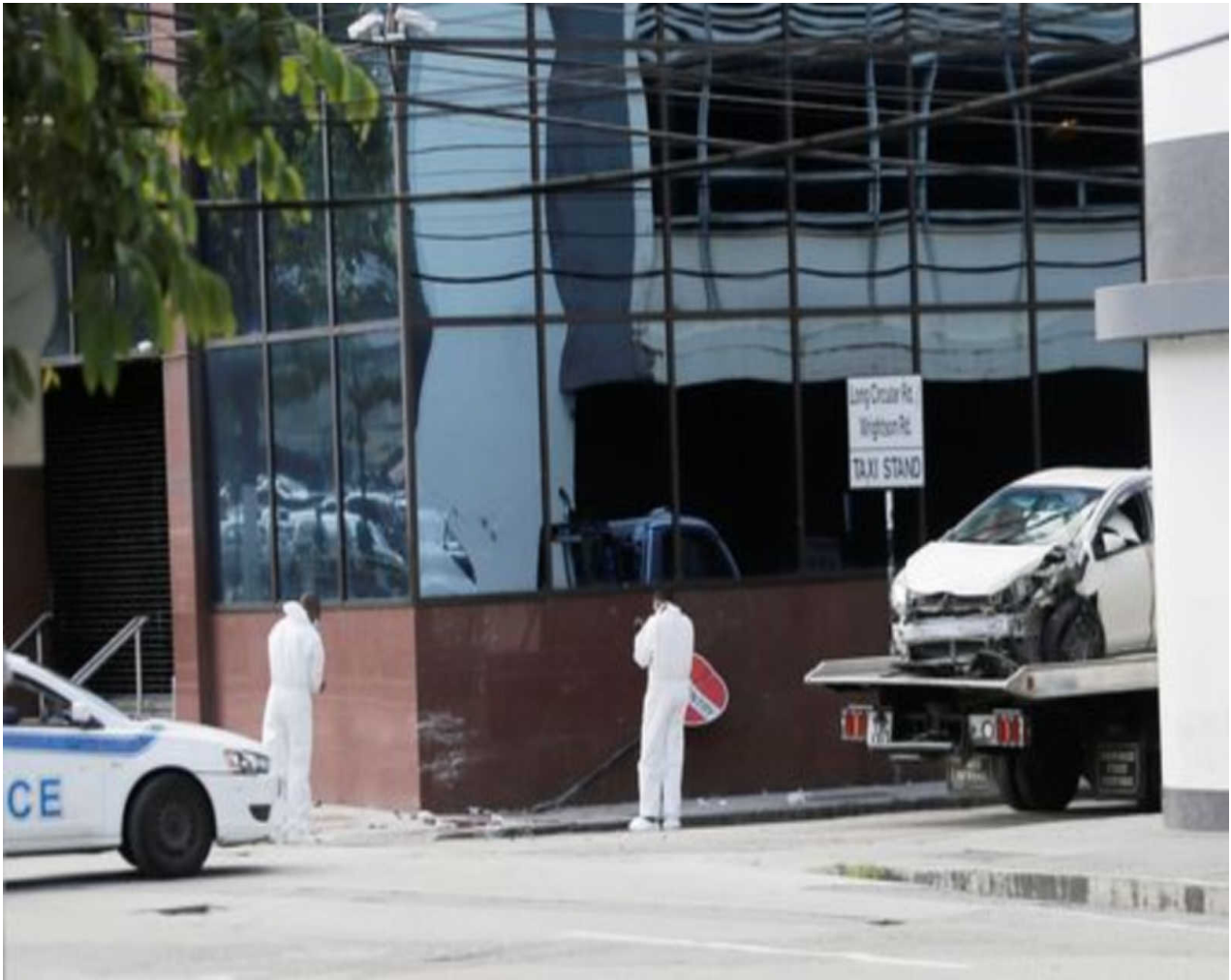


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Three Shot Dead From Behind by Police in Trinidad, Autopsies Show, Among Them Were Two Minors

Caribbean / **Published On July 09, 2022 06:10 AM /**

Janeke Simon **July 09, 2022**



Scene of incident where three men, including two minors were shot from behind in Laventille, Trinidad, according to autopsies. By. ABRAHAM DIAZ

The three men shot and killed by Trinidadian police last Saturday were all shot from behind, according to autopsy results.

After the incident, police said that a car with six men, all from the economically depressed community of Laventille, had shot at them as officers attempted to detain the vehicle, responding to reports of a stolen vehicle.

That prompted return fire, police say, which resulted in the three fatalities. Dead are 24-year-old Fabien Richards, and 17-year-olds Leonardo Williams and Isiah Roberts. Another teenager, a 15-year-old, was grazed by the police bullets and taken to hospital, while the remaining two survivors were detained by police.

The shooting caused fiery protests in the vicinity of Beetham Gardens, located on the outskirts of the capital city Port of Spain. A number of people were arrested after mattresses and tires were dragged into the streets and burned by protestors demanding justice for the dead, and the end to police killings in the country. Those protestors were condemned as lawless by Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley. "We're better than that," Mr. Rowley said at a press conference on Thursday.

Since the deaths, relatives of the three showed reporters in the local press autopsy results, which in each case found that the fatal bullets all entered either the back of the head, neck, back, or upper limbs. Family members have used these results to cast doubt on the police account of events, questioning how men who were supposedly firing on the officers could have been shot from behind.

The 15-year-old survivor of the incident, who has now been released from the hospital, told local news outlet TV6 that, rather than the Smith & Wesson pistol police claim to have recovered, the only weapon among the six that night was a flip knife. The teen, who has been identified only as Jeremiah, insisted that surveillance footage would corroborate his account of the events that transpired. Jeremiah said that the police began shooting even though his hands were outside the window of the car and he had been shouting to them that the six were on their way home from a party. He further claimed that the officers peppered the car he and his friends were in with a barrage of bullets from inside their police vehicle, and continued their onslaught until more people began to emerge onto the promenade.

Newsday, a local newspaper, reported that Jeremiah was due to revisit the site of the shooting with relatives on Wednesday, but could not make it there, telling his attorney Om Lalla that he was too traumatized to make the trip.

The two other survivors who were initially detained by police have since both been released. Relatives of the deceased say they have all filed complaints with the Police Complaints Authority, and Lalla says he also plans to write both to the PCA and the Police Commissioner on behalf of his client.

Since the shooting, four members of the Guard and Emergency Branch have been placed on clerical duties while the Police Complaints Authority and Police both conduct separate investigations.

In a news conference earlier in the week Acting Commissioner of Police, McDonald Jacob, said police have already obtained footage from CCTVs in the area.