

MEDIA RELEASE

Decision Hearing of a Judge Alone Trial Streamed Live Online

The Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago accomplished another first today, as a live stream of the decision hearing of a Judge Alone Trial was made available to the public on the Judiciary's website. While the accused were present at the virtual hearing, only the Judge and state and defence attorneys appearing on screen for live stream.

The decision hearing of the Judge Alone Trial in the matter of *CR 5046/2009 The State v Akeel Mitchell and Richard Chato* was presided over by the Honourable Mme Justice Ramsumair-Hinds and made available for public viewing on the Judiciary's website given the anticipated high number of requests by the public and the media to view the case. Over 12,000 unique viewers tuned in for the live stream.

Mme Justice Ramsumair-Hinds provided the details of her deliberations and her detailed reasons before pronouncing her finding of guilt of both accused persons.

At an earlier virtual hearing in the case, Mme Justice Ramsumair-Hinds had remarked on the need to preserve the integrity of the trial process while also ensuring that the trial was conducted in open court. Throughout the case, media houses and the public had been given access to virtual hearings by a meeting link and were given particular rules of etiquette to be followed.

The Judge had noted that:

“Although the courtroom was now virtually available in the bedrooms, living rooms, offices and...even vehicles of members of the public, I do not need those atmospheres to enter my courtroom. Persons who wished to enter the virtual courtroom were required to display their names, which allowed me to peruse the list of participants and inquire whether attendees might in fact be witnesses yet to give evidence. Media houses were present in, practically, every single sitting as well as several attorneys who were not on record.”

In an effort to keep the interruptions by people entering and leaving the virtual courtroom to a minimum during the delivery of the ruling today it was decided to livestream the proceedings.

Assistant Director of Public Prosecutions Sabrina Dougdeen-Jaglal and attorneys Anju Bhola and Sophia Smith-Sandy represented the State. The defendants were represented by attorneys Mario Merritt, Evans Welch, Randall Raphael, Kelston Pope, Kirby Joseph and Gabriel Hernandez. The sentencing hearing is scheduled for August 23, 2021.

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For further information, kindly contact:

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