



**VIDS**

**Association of Indigenous Village Chiefs in Suriname**

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PRESS RELEASE VIDS INDEPENDENCE DAY 2022

## **VIDS on Independence Day 2022: What is there to celebrate?**

On this Independence Day 2022, we ask ourselves: What do we as the original inhabitants and owners of this land have to celebrate? That our ancestors were massacred and expelled, that with the law of the colonizers, and then with the laws of the Surinamese rulers, we were rendered landless, hopeless and disenfranchised? That that Independence in 1975 did not change that but on the contrary excluded us even further, through political parties and electoral systems and nowadays donor projects and international deals that only result in the rich getting richer? That "national interest" in practice only means the interest of a group of rulers? Should we celebrate that a village in the south finally has a school, and that another village finally received food parcels? That we should drink water from brown mercury rivers? That our own soil is under our feet given away by those people in power? That those in power proclaim that they respect human rights, except ours? Should we celebrate that Suriname has been taken away from us to make it what it is today?

VIDS, the institute of the traditional authorities of the Indigenous peoples of Suriname, makes a special appeal on this special day to everyone, in particular the rulers, to work seriously after today, together with us, on real justice, equality, recognition and protection of human rights, including ours; establishing strong dialogue structures so that decisions are made by the people and not by rulers who benefit themselves and their own group; setting the right priorities for the use of scarce resources. We ask that the Constitution be amended to recognize and protect us, and that the long-promised law on collective rights of Indigenous and Tribal peoples is finally passed in Parliament, in accordance with the highest international standards. That equal opportunities are created, also for us, and not only for the city. Opportunities that are actually within our reach. Only then, eventually, we can truly celebrate our independence and autonomy together as a nation.

25 November 2022