



HIGH COMMISSION FOR ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

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PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday 6th September 2017...In the early hours of this morning, Antigua and Barbuda and neighbouring Islands endured the force of Hurricane Irma, a category 5 hurricane. With winds of 185 mph, Hurricane Irma has been described as one of the most powerful Atlantic storms ever recorded. The Government and people of Antigua and Barbuda have mobilised extensively to prepare for this storm with wide usage of the media and social media to provide information to the public, the opening of shelters right across the Islands to offer safe haven, to the pruning of trees and clearing of drains to reduce the risk of flooding. Our hoteliers and tourism partners have also mobilised effectively to ensure that visitors to our country remain secure during the passage of the storm.

The winds have caused damage to communication systems and we await official word on the extent of such damage. For much of this morning, contact with Barbuda was severely curtailed.

The High Commission can confirm that as of present, there has been no reports of fatalities or major structural damage to Antigua. The Mount St. John Medical Centre reported that three persons sought medical attention for minor injuries. The National office of Disaster Services has also indicated that a preliminary assessment has indicated fallen trees, fallen electrical poles and some damaged roofs. Work has begun to re-open the V.C. Bird International Airport later today.

Barbuda, however, is reported to have received the full force of the storm and efforts are being made to ascertain the extent of the damage to the sister isle. Before communication was lost with Barbuda around 12:30am AST this morning, reports had been made that several buildings, including the Police Station, had been damaged. The Met Office has indicated that Barbuda was pounded by sustained winds of 115mph and gusts of 150mph. The Director of NODS, Philmore Mullin, has advised the High Commission that as at 8:00am AST, contact with Barbuda has not yet been established and efforts are afoot to make contact including through the support of the Coastguard. The High Commission will update nationals and friends of the situation in Barbuda and Antigua as further information comes to hand.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne has stated: "with all hands on deck, we must now focus on the recovery efforts that should be swift. It should be business as usual within the next 12 to 24 hours". In this regard, the V.C. Bird International Airport remains closed as following relevant safety checks.

Our prayers and thoughts remain with the people of the Caribbean and the southern United States as Hurricane Irma wends her way further north. We also pay close attention to Tropical Storm Jose which has formed in the Atlantic and is expected to attain hurricane status later today. Jose's projected path points to another situation of potential concern for the Leeward Islands.



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The 5:00am AST advisory from the Florida-based National Hurricane Centre has indicated that Antigua and Barbuda remains under a hurricane warning meaning that hurricane conditions are expected somewhere within the warning area.

The High Commission continues to monitor the situation and will continue to provide updates on its website www.antigua-barbuda.com and social media pages, www.facebook.com/abhcuk, www.twitter.com/abhcuk and www.instagram.com/abhcuk. Additional information can also be obtained from: <https://www.facebook.com/abstvradio/> and <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>. Our regular number above will also remain available outside of opening hours to facilitate calls from concerned citizens until otherwise indicated.