

St. Eustatius, July 13, 2021.

Dear Government Commissioner on St. Eustatius,

Together with a group of concerned Statians, I protest against the excavations at the airport. I therefore demand an immediate halt to all activities until further agreement is reached on the way forward.

According to the group with whom I am addressing this letter to you, that way forward must be followed according to a more detailed plan; this plan must be agreed upon by or on behalf of the group of concerned Statians with whom I am acting, before the work can be continued. That plan must be *your plan* with implementers such as Secar providing their input of course, but emphatically the group states that the Government Commissioner is primarily responsible for this. Indeed, during the information evening on June 21, 2021 - where only questions were allowed, no discussions - this responsibility was explicitly defined as such (including by yourself).

This plan will in any case have to include which objectives are pursued, how the work will be carried out, how a reburial (of the already excavated human remains) will be organized and how, furthermore, the found human remains will be treated with respect. Assuming that the group of concerned Statians is represented by the Island Council, the plan requires prior approval of the Island Council.

Sensitivities as experienced by the population are currently being trampled on. For example, the Island Council was only informed after the excavation work had long begun, just before the first press release would see the light of day. It seems to the group that you have not, or at least not sufficiently, taken into account the feelings as they are on the island. Moreover, it seems to us that you are also in violation of the law that states how to act in cases where buried human remains are suspected or actually found.

Moreover, the group of Statians noted, the injustice done to the people at the time should not be continued as a matter of course in the present day by simply acting, digging, investigating, or whatever, without consultation with next of kin (in fact, all Statians not brought in from outside).

The group of concerned Stadians considers emphatically that this is not just about "things" or "stuff" but about "people", ancestors of the current local population, and that this observation must have been known to you from the beginning. It therefore greatly disturbs the group that apparently economic motives, aimed at familiarity with the wider public in the United States and in Europe, which might stimulate tourism, have been given greater weight in your considerations than what the local population actually feels and experiences.

For the record, this observation fits into a trend. Indeed, since the intervention of the Dutch government in the governance of St. Eustatius in February 2018, no initiative has yet been taken to truly consult with the Stadian population.

I would like to hear from you.

Kind regards,  
together with a group of concerned Stadians,

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*Cc: Chairman and members of the Kingdom Relations Committee of the Lower House  
Cultural Heritage Agency  
Members of the Island Council of St. Eustatius*