

## The Surinamese forced contribution to Dutch prosperity is €250 trillion

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### Why this calculation?

In this article, I provide a rough estimate of the forced contribution Suriname made to the development of the Dutch economy through its colonial occupation. The purpose of this calculation is threefold.

First, it's an exercise in decolonizing the mind. There are still Surinamese people who claim we should be grateful for the Dutch occupation of Suriname. It's a form of colonization of the mind. This article demonstrates that the Netherlands should be grateful to Suriname for its forced contribution to Dutch prosperity.

Secondly, during King Willem-Alexander's state visit, President Simons said that we must dare to face the past and not hide it, even if it is unpleasant for the Netherlands. This contribution reveals the forced contribution Suriname makes to Dutch prosperity. The amount is 250 trillion euros.

Third, it can form the basis for future historical research that can produce more accurate estimates. I've made a rough estimate.

### The relationship with reparations

Reparations are the financial translation of compensation for historical injustice. This injustice had both material and immaterial components. The amount of compensation does not depend on law, but on civilization. After the Second World War, negotiations began between Germany on the one hand, the Conference on Jewish Claims Against Germany, and the State of Israel on the other regarding reparations. The Jewish side had submitted a claim for US\$822 million between 1952 and 1965 as reparations for the Jewish Holocaust, which lasted five years. This money was used to present the Jewish Holocaust, both in Germany and internationally, as the worst crime against humanity, worse than the European human trafficking and slavery that lasted 350 years. Museums were established, countless films were made, many books were written, and all of this contributed to the fact that Germany did not stop at the \$822 million transfer, but has since contributed many billions annually to Jewish causes and continues to contribute. In 2024, the total stood at \$90 billion. Reparations was not a matter of justice (which would have stopped at \$822 million), but of civilization.

The €66 million contribution the Netherlands has pledged to Suriname for bilateral projects cannot be considered a form of reparations. Given the size of the Dutch debt to Suriname, that amount would be an insult. By not considering it part of the reparations, Suriname is spared that insult. Let it be what it is: a contribution to bilateral cooperation. Caricom has established a process for reparations. We will see what comes of it.

The discussion about reparations is of secondary economic significance for Suriname. Economic development cannot depend on reparations; it must be based on its own strength, its own natural resources, its own ingenuity, and its own efforts.

### The methodology

The calculation is based on the following principles, which are understandable and acceptable to everyone.

1. If you set up a business on land that isn't yours, you have to pay rent. That's not a shocking statement. The Netherlands has occupied Indigenous/Surinamese land without paying rent. This represents a loss of income for Suriname and a contribution to the Dutch economy, which has brutally occupied land that wasn't its.
2. If you take goods, you must pay for them. You shouldn't steal, but pay. This is an accepted principle in all societies. In other Caribbean countries, gold and silver have been stolen. In Suriname, the Dutch used Surinamese land to produce sugar, coffee, and cocoa using forced labor. If you grow agricultural products on land that isn't yours using stolen labor, you are not the rightful owner of those products. If you do take them back to the Netherlands, that is theft.
3. If you employ workers, you must pay them a fair wage. Forced labor is prohibited. For centuries, enslaved people have been forced to work for free. Asian indentured laborers have been underpaid for decades. We will not estimate underpaid labor.<sup>1</sup>
4. If you cause human suffering, then you must pay compensation for human suffering.
5. If you owe a debt, you must pay interest on it, unless you follow Islam, where interest is forbidden. The Dutch are not Muslim.

Based on these assumptions, we created an economic model to produce rough estimates. In this model, we used an interest rate of 6%. This rate was used by the French to force reparations from Haiti. The Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804 ended in a victory for the Black population. It took the defeated French twenty years to reorganize for a decisive battle to restore slavery. In 1825, the French arrived with 14 warships and 528 cannons and presented Haiti with a choice: pay 150 million gold francs in reparations and have Haiti recognized as a free nation by France and other European countries, or face an economic blockade, famine, war, and the reinstatement of slavery. The amount was equal to a full year's worth of Haiti's income. Haiti reluctantly accepted. They were forced to borrow the amount from French banks, which charged 6% interest on their loans. Haiti completed its reparations payments to France in 1947. We focused primarily on slavery and the occupation of Suriname. We did not include the suffering of Indigenous and Asian forced laborers. Nor did we assess the economic dimension of the Dutch violation of human rights in Suriname between 1863 and 1954.

### 1. Unpaid rent: €300 trillion

Area of Suriname km <sup>2</sup>	163,820
Number of years 1667-1954	287
Rent per m <sup>2</sup> per year	€0.00001
Interest rate	6.00%
Rent per year	€1,638,200.00
Rent total	€30,002,003,168,495.00
Rent trillion	€30.00

#### Explanation

- The area of Suriname is 163,820 km<sup>2</sup>, that is 163,820,000,000 m<sup>2</sup>.
- The number of years that the Netherlands occupied Indigenous/Surinamese land is 287, calculated from 1667 up to and including the entry into force of the Statute in 1954. After that, Suriname gained self-government.
- For the rent per square meter, we use €0.00001. This is somewhat arbitrary. The current average rent for agricultural land in the Netherlands is €0.10 per m<sup>2</sup>. We've taken an arbitrary fraction of this.
- The starting rent per year is €1.64 million.
- In 287 years, interest on interest will have to be paid because the debt remains unpaid. The total amount in 1954 was €30 trillion. If the Netherlands had paid rent, it would never have been so prosperous. Suriname contributed to that prosperity because it was forced to abandon rent collection.

## 2. Stolen goods

Sugar import 1683-1939	€153,168,991,110,187.00
Sugar import trillion	€153.17
Coffee import 1724-1939	€17,038,750,000,555.80
Coffee import trillion	€17.04
Cotton import 1760-1867	€634,530,104,911.55
Cotton import trillion	€0.63
Cocoa import 1732-1938	€628,082,102,616.97
Cocoa import trillion	€0.63
Total trillion	€171.47

### Explanation

Armand Zunder has compiled figures on the import of agricultural products such as sugar, coffee, cotton, and cocoa into the Netherlands for the period 1683-1939. <sup>2</sup>He provides the quantities and turnover in Dutch guilders for each year at that time. A guilder in 1683 represented a skilled worker's daily wage. Today, that would be €100-€200. The current value varies annually. For convenience, we have equated a guilder to one euro in all years.

The compound interest value of the import is based on 1954 and related to the year of import.

Sugar was imported from 1683 to 1939, coffee from 1724 to 1939, cotton from 1760 to 1867, and cocoa from 1732 to 1938. The total amount of stolen goods is €171 trillion.

## 3. Unpaid wages during slavery

Number of Africans brought in	216,000
Number of years 1667-1863	196
Number of generations 1667-1863	10
Number of births per generation	3
Number of people in slavery	6,480,000
Number of years worked	20
Number of working days per year	313
Total number of unpaid workdays	40,564,800,000
Unpaid wages per day (€)	0.01
Total unpaid wages (€)	405,648,000
Not paid at all	€36,991,243,512,283.70
Total unpaid trillion	€36.99

### Explanation

To accurately estimate the amount of free labor provided during slavery, we need demographic data per year: births, deaths, and age. We don't have that data. We've made a rough estimate, which we know is flawed.

from the slave ship database ( [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org) ). This data included Suriname and Curaçao, but I couldn't find a breakdown for Curaçao. The lion's share went to Suriname. Moreover, the data is based on ship archives that have been found. The figure of 216,000 is therefore a minimum. We have assumed a generation to be 20 years. Given the high mortality rate, you could even assume a generation to be 15 years. In the period 1667-1863, there were 10 generations born (196/20).

Based on various studies, I've estimated the number of births per generation to be 3. This means that 6.5 million people in Suriname were born into slavery. They worked an average of 20 years of their lives (from age 10 to age 30). The number of workdays in a year is 313 (six days a week). The number of unpaid workdays is 40 trillion. At a daily wage of €0.01, that amounts to €405 billion. We calculated the compound interest using this amount as a starting point. It's not entirely accurate, but we'll give you a rough estimate. The total amount of unpaid wages based on compound interest is €37 trillion.

#### 4. Compensation for human suffering

Number of Africans brought in	216,000
% died during crossing	10%
Number of departures from Africa	240,000
Ratio of deaths in Africa per people left alive	3
Total victims of Dutch human trafficking	720,000
Number of people in slavery	6,480,000
Total number of people for compensation	7,200,000
Compensation for human suffering per person (€)	9000
Total starting amount (€)	64,800,000,000
Number of years 1954-1863	91
Total amount (€)	13,013,938,347,429
Total amount trillion (€)	€13.01

#### Explanation

In this calculation, we estimated the number of Africans who suffered human suffering as a result of slavery. We assumed the number of Africans who arrived alive in Suriname was 216,000. The average mortality rate during the crossing was 10%. This means that 240,000 people left Africa alive. For every African who left the coast of Africa alive, an average of three people died in the interior during the process of kidnapping and walking to the coast. The number of victims in Africa as a result of slavery in Suriname is approximately 720,000. Above, we saw that the number of people born into slavery in Suriname was 6.5 million. The total number of people who suffered human suffering is 7.2 million. When slavery was abolished in 1863, the slave-makers received 300 guilders. That is approximately €9,000 today. We assume that the total amount would have been paid upon the abolition of slavery. The compound interest period is 91 years. The total amount of unpaid compensation for human suffering is €13 trillion.

#### **Suriname's total contribution to the prosperity of the Netherlands**

Suriname has made a huge contribution to the prosperity of the Netherlands as a result of colonialism. The total amount is €251 trillion. The Gross National Product of the Netherlands is €1 trillion. This includes unpaid rent, stolen goods, unpaid wages, and unpaid compensation for human suffering. The calculation is based on common sense. It's not complicated.

Unpaid rent	€30.00
Stolen goods	€171.47
Unpaid wages	€36.99
Unpaid compensation for human suffering	€13.01
Total trillion	€251.48

How do we handle this data? If we want to give a rough indication of the contribution Suriname has made to Dutch prosperity through colonialism, it can be summarized in a single figure: €250 trillion.

The downside of Dutch prosperity is the exploitation and oppression of the Surinamese people. The Netherlands could offer apologies, but it could also simply say "Thank you" for Suriname's contribution to Dutch prosperity.

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<sup>1</sup>Radjinder Bhagwanbali is collecting statistical data to make this estimate. We await the results of his research.

<sup>2</sup>Zunder, A. (2010): Reparations. Amrit. The Hague, Appendix 1.