

+ -



**STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT  
ON  
CRIMES AGAINST CERTAIN VULNERABLE GROUPS-  
WOMEN, CHILDREN AND THE ELDERLY**

**MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY  
HON. DR. HORACE CHANG, MP**

**October 30, 2018**

Mr. Speaker, I find it necessary to comment on the state of crime in the country. **While we can speak to an overall 21% decline in the number of murders in Jamaica since the start of the year, there has been a series of cruel attacks on vulnerable groups – particularly the elderly and young girls.**

Mr. Speaker, while the Government continues the process towards citizens' security for **all** Jamaicans, it cannot go unnoticed that there is a 29% decline in the overall number of children murdered. However, when compared to last year, the attacks on these vulnerable groups appear to be more heinous and barbaric and is cause for grave concern to the government.

Mr. Speaker, the forever silent voices of 38 of our children that were taken from us since January, like 14 year-old Yettanya Francis and 14 year-old Raven Wilson, saddens and shames us as a nation. The slaughter of Deon Smith and her 16 year-old daughter Jayshenel Gordon, as well as the slaying of 25-year old Khyhymn Campbell, allegedly by persons they knew well, indicate a level of callousness in the souls of some of our citizens - that **must** be rooted out.

Mr. Speaker, I pause to offer my condolences to the families that are coping with the loss of their loved ones at the hands of heartless murderers. We mourn as a nation with them.

The impact of these crimes on loved ones, family well-being and overall quality of life in communities have not gone unnoticed.

This serves as constant reminder and motivation for the government to ensure that our best efforts are operationalized, at all times, to give optimal results and afford justice to our victims.

In this regard, Mr. Speaker, we continue to implement several responses across various platforms to enable a holistic response. This includes the Government embarking on a number of relevant legislative pursuits to strengthen the legal framework to provide greater protection to our women, children and the elderly as well as to strengthen the legal authority to bring the perpetrators to justice. **Mr. Speaker, it must be that where offences are committed, we must have severe penalties that act as deterrents to these crimes.**  
**Justice must be swift, sure and severe.**

Mr. Speaker, in this regard a Joint Select Committee of Parliament has recently concluded deliberations on a suite of laws namely the ***Sexual Offences Act***, the ***Domestic Violence Act***, the ***Child Care and Protection Act*** and the ***Offences Against the Person Act***. Mr. Speaker, at the heart of this review, was the special emphasis placed on the protection of the vulnerable –women, children, the elderly and persons living with disabilities-from violence and abuse.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that a number of Submissions were made by members of the public and various Government and Non-Government Organizations to the Joint Select Committee which is now compiling a report to be submitted to Parliament.

Mr. Speaker you may also recall a recent amendment made to the ***Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Suppression and Punishment) Act***. This amendment, Mr. Speaker, allows for trafficking offences to be tried by a Judge without a jury.

Mr. Speaker, The Government, while recognizing the need for an adequate legislative framework, is also cognizant that the tools ought to be provided to enforce and support these laws.

Mr. Speaker, at the heart of the Government's thrust, is the safety and security of all our citizens. While we continue the renewed focus on the JCF and the process to reorganize and equip the police over the next couple years, the public is hereby reassured that the Government will continue its current drive to invest into initiatives surrounding public safety.

**The recently launched Public Safety and Traffic Enforcement Branch (PSTEB) of the JCF is only but one of these initiatives. The work of this branch is the pursuit of order and security in our public spaces. The PSTEB along with the Community Safety and Security Branch, also of the JCF, will work to get into our communities to help in influencing behavior change in our society.**

In addition, there is also a drive to bolster police investigations. Mr. Speaker, we know that while we would prefer preventative measures to deter perpetrators, there is also a need for measures to guarantee that a perpetrator will be caught if he commits a crime.

Mr. Speaker, the Counter Terrorism and Organized Crime (CTOC) Branch and the Criminal Investigative Branch (CIB) with the support of the Major Organized Crime and Anti-Corruption Agency (MOCA), will bring increased focus to investigating these incidents to identify and apprehend individuals associated with these heinous acts. These branches will work with the Center for Investigation of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse (CISOCA) that will be strengthened to adequately investigate crimes against these vulnerable groups.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to this, **the Ministry has also expanded the scope of our existing partnership with Crime Stop to include a special reward scheme to improve investigations of murders of vulnerable individuals.**

**Within the current context, Mr. Speaker we are particularly concerned about children and the elderly as vulnerable, however this will not exclude individuals that may meet the criteria and therefore require a similar response.** We believe this added incentive will encourage more persons to come forward with useful information to assist with the investigations, arrest and successful prosecutions of the guilty parties.

We again encourage Jamaicans to come forward and stand up for what is right. No one with information that could lead to the arrest of any criminal should remain silent. The police are depending on the cooperation of all Jamaicans to come forward to assist us in this fight.

Mr. Speaker, we have been partnering, and will continue to partner, with other Ministries, Departments and Agencies in putting in place robust social intervention initiatives towards diverting our young people away from a life of crime.

**At the community level, through the Citizen Security and Justice Programme (CSJP) and the JCF Community Safety and Security Branch (CSSB), programmes focused on Violence Interruption, Mentorship, Effective Parenting and Conflict Management among several others have sought to establish capacity to better respond to safety and security related issues.**

There are also increased efforts to implement violence prevention and conflict resolution education and training in schools as a means to address maladaptive behaviours of students with an aim to reduce out of school suspensions and drop outs, therefore improving chances of completing their education.

Mr. Speaker our success in this regard is crucial, as by doing so, we will significantly reduce the likelihood of a youngster becoming engaged in delinquent and criminal acts and, in the same breath, Mr. Speaker, also a future victim of circumstances.

**The Ministry of National Security will be launching, over the next 2-3 months, a programme which intends to effect behaviour change and restore respect and value to some of our socially neglected and deprived individuals.**

This is a part of an overall approach by the Ministry of National Security to develop a more efficient response to address the social norms that inform and shape the perspectives and perceptions of violence among youths aged 12 years and older.

**We do not say poverty is the cause of this wickedness. Rather it is a reflection of a deeper malaise that has befallen our society. Violence against the vulnerable is depraved. But especially when it is against our children must be contained and support and opportunities be provided for restoring self-worth and self-expression.** This campaign will run in parallel to the Ministry's social intervention strategies in several of our most volatile communities.

## **Conclusion**

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of National Security will secure our citizens, particularly the most vulnerable in our society. **The safety of all citizens, the security of our public spaces and the protection of our borders remain the mandate of this Ministry.**

**But I reiterate to this House and indeed the citizens of Jamaica, that our women and children, the disabled and the elderly must be protected instead of assaulted and violated.**

We will lead in this charge and it will be executed by the Jamaica Constabulary Force.

Mr. Speaker, this culture of violence must give way to peace and security in our Jamaican society. We must begin to value the sanctity of life and change our normalized attitude to disorder and violence.

Mr. Speaker, I have in the past called the brutal acts of violence against our women and children, shameful and un-Jamaican. I do so again today. I call on us as Jamaicans to do better as a people and as a nation.

**These violent acts must never become normal. Murder, rape and abuse of our young girls and boys must be condemned in every family, in every community, in every parish, even as I stand here and condemn it today.**

The Ministry of National Security is committed to restoring public order and safety in Jamaica. The government will continue to invest in the security forces to ensure a safer and prosperous Jamaica.