



JAMAICANS FOR JUSTICE



2 March 2017

JOINT OPEN LETTER FROM JAMAICANS FOR JUSTICE AND AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL TO JAMAICA'S PRIME MINISTER, ANDREW HOLNESS

Dear Prime Minister Holness,

Amnesty International and Jamaicans for Justice (JFJ) write to you on the first anniversary of your election to office as an opportunity to advance some of the most pressing human rights issues in Jamaica.

When Amnesty International presented last November the report *Waiting in Vain: Unlawful police killings and relatives' long struggle for justice* you reaffirmed your Government's commitment to ensuring that the human rights of all Jamaicans are protected. We welcomed this commitment, and anticipated the translation of these words into tangible actions that set the protection of human rights as a priority of your Government.

We understand that protecting citizens from violence is not an easy task, and recognize the difficult conditions in which law enforcement officials work. Accordingly, we are very glad for your stated rejection of harsh policing, that typically punishes the poor, results in unlawful killings by police, and has failed to address violent crime.

What Jamaica needs most is a professional, well-trained and fully-resourced police force that can efficiently tackle the national crime situation in full respect of human rights. Last June, the Commission of Enquiry into the joint police-military operation in 2010 issued clear recommendations for police reform. Regrettably, action on these is still outstanding. We press your Government to urgently implement a time-bound plan to action them. Jamaicans paid over J\$300 million (US\$ 2.4 million) for the Commission of Enquiry. They deserve results.

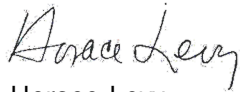
The announced replacement of the Constabulary Force Act with a modern Police Service Act is good news. This measure, if implemented properly, could trigger the paradigm-shift needed to change Jamaica's public security landscape. JFJ and Amnesty International stand ready to offer support to ensure any new legislation is compatible with international human rights standards.

Since 2010, Jamaica has made progress in strengthening its police oversight system, through its support to INDECOM which has overhauled the way investigations into killings by the police are conducted. We welcome your administration's promise to maintain INDECOM, and we call on your government to speedily table the promised revisions to the INDECOM Act.

While we are glad to see a number of important proposals to improve the efficiency of the justice system, we are concerned that the recently-announced budgetary allocation to the justice system still does not sufficiently enable it to deliver the necessary justice outcomes, despite the marginal increase over 2016's figures. Police efforts, no matter how robust, depend on the effective administration of justice to meaningfully reduce crime. And reform of the police requires the state to quickly bring any law enforcement officers suspected of

criminal responsibility for unlawful killings or ill-treatment to justice. We call on your government to more seriously invest in the justice system and to facilitate timely access to justice in cases where it is alleged state officials may have committed human rights violations.

Addressing human rights challenges in a context of high crime and tight fiscal space is no-doubt difficult. JFJ and Amnesty International remain willing to work with your administration to find solutions that advance our shared goals of a safe and just Jamaica for all.



Horace Levy
Jamaicans for Justice's Executive Director



Erika Guevara Rosas
Amnesty International's Americas Director