

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
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Jamaica: Public Security Crisis - Facts & figures and Case Studies

FACTS AND FIGURES

In 2008, there were 1,611 murders in Jamaica, which, while less than the peak of 1,674 in 2005, was an increase of 2.3% on 2007. 628 people were murdered between January and May 2009 compared to 688 in the same period in 2008 (Jamaica Constabulary Force).

Between 2003 and 2008, a total of 398 children have been killed by violent means either due to gang warfare or attacks, abductions, rape and murder. Another 441 have been injured by guns (Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, December 2008).

94 children were murdered in 2008 compared with 70 murdered in 2007 (Jamaican Constabulary Force).

The majority of killings, whether perpetrated by gang members or police officers, affect residents of socially-excluded inner-city areas. Residents of those communities also experience the highest rates of unemployment and the lowest standards in terms of access to water, electricity and security of housing tenure.

Only 4 convictions were reported between 1999 and 2009 out of a total of more than 1,700 reported fatal shootings. No convictions have been reported since 2006 (Bureau of Special Investigations, Jamaica Constabulary Force).

Less than one third of crimes are reported to the police (National Crime Victimization Survey released in January 2009).

CASE STUDIES

Anthony Nelson

On 7 January 2009, police shot dead Anthony Nelson, aged 22, and seriously injured, Ricardo Suckoo, aged 23. The shootings happened at a construction site at Central Village, St. Catherine, where the two men were working. Ricardo Suckoo told Amnesty International what happened.

“It was about 11.30am. We were sitting in the site having lunch when three policemen came from behind us. They asked us what we were doing there. We answered that we were working on the site. After that, they started shooting at us. Anthony was killed on the spot. I received several gunshots: in the hands, in the mouth, at the shoulder. I pretended to be dead but then a policeman kicked at me and realized that I was not dead. I heard one of the policemen saying ‘We have to stop because the carpenter is watching.’ If the carpenter hadn't been on the roof witnessing the scene, I think they would have shot at me again.

The policemen put me and Anthony's body in a van and drove towards the hospital. One of my colleagues tried to get in the van with us but he was kicked out. He then followed the police van with his jeep. The police was driving very slowly; probably they wanted to make sure I died before reaching the hospital. Again, I think that they could have shot at me if the jeep was not following."

According to the police report, "a team of police was on special operation in the Central Village area when three men were seen acting in a suspicious manner. When accosted, the men opened fire at the lawmen, who took evasive action and returned the fire. Two men were injured and the other escaped. A gun was taken from the men."

Ricardo Suckoo was hospitalized for two weeks following the shooting. He was then discharged and transferred to the Bridgeport police station. He remained in custody for a week, during which time his family had to provide care as he had not fully recovered from his injuries. He was charged with shooting with intent and released on bail. At the time of writing, he was still receiving medical treatment for his injuries including physiotherapy sessions, although the cost was sometimes prohibitive.

Investigations into the death of Anthony Nelson by the Bureau of Special Investigations and by the Police Public Complaints Authority have not concluded. At the time of writing, more than six months after the shootings, forensic reports had yet to be completed. Ricardo Suckoo does not know why police shot at them. Anthony Nelson's mother told Amnesty International "I know my son is innocent, so let me hope justice will be made."

Randall Richards

Eighteen-year-old Randall Richards was shot dead by police officers in his home in Kelliman Terrace, Waltham Park Road, Kingston, on 24 June 2008. His parents witnessed the shooting.

His mother told Amnesty International that several police officers knocked at the door of their house at about 4.30am. She opened the door and the officers came in and started to search the house. Police entered a room where two of Randall Richards' friends were spending the night. She heard the men crying in the room and then gunshots.

The police came out of the room carrying the bodies of the two men and put them in a van parked outside the house. Randall Richards was on the veranda. The police came back into the house and saw him crying. His mother saw him standing in front of the policemen with his hands open in the air. She heard him cry out to her, "Mummy, mummy!" and one of the officers replied "Shut up, pussy!". She said another officer then shot at her son and he fell to the floor. The police took his body to the van and drove away. According to the post-mortem, Randall Richards died from multiple gunshot wounds.

According to press reports, the police were carrying out an operation to arrest a man wanted for murder.

An investigation into the death of Randall Richards was opened by the Bureau of Special Investigations. At the time of writing, more than a year after his death, police statements had yet to be taken and forensic reports had not been completed.

St. Catherine communities

On 7 and 8 December 2008, Jamaican television broadcast video footage showing residents of the St. Catherine communities of Gravel Heights and Tredegar Park fleeing their homes and loading their furniture and other belongings onto moving vehicles. Around 200 residents had been given an ultimatum by armed gang members. According to media reports, they were told to leave their homes or they would be killed. Video footage showed police officers watching the residents flee, but not attempting to intervene. It is not clear what triggered the ultimatum. Some local commentators alleged that the threats were part of a battle between two rival gangs for political control of the communities. According to others, the ultimatums were linked to attempts at extortion.

It was not until some time after these events that the authorities took steps to enable some residents to return

to their homes. When Amnesty International visited Gravel Heights and Tredegar Park at the end of February 2009, soldiers were guarding the communities and there were people living in some of the houses. Many people had returned after the deployment of troops in early January, but others had chosen not to because they feared reprisals. "Those who didn't want to leave the house had their houses burnt. At least 18 houses were burnt" one resident told Amnesty International. By mid-March, most remaining residents had returned to their homes. Many found their homes vandalized.

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