



**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Thursday, February 10, 2022

National Security Minister Tables Stronger, more Robust Firearms Act

The Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Act, 2022, will introduce harsher penalties for offences connected to the illicit trade, manufacture, stockpiling, possession and use of illegal guns.

This was disclosed by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, the Hon. Dr. Horace Chang, who tabled the Bill in Parliament on Thursday, February 10, 2022.

The Bill represents the most far-reaching attempt by Government to bring under control the propensity for illegal gun activity in the country, by, inter alia, strengthening penalties associated with gun-related crimes.

“The Firearms (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 2022, is not only aimed at addressing the several challenges being experienced in the country with respect to the proliferation of illegal firearms, but importantly, to increase the applicable penalties for breaches of provisions of the Act relating to prohibited weapons” he said.

Minister Chang added that all guns that have not been subject to the local regulatory regime are considered prohibited firearms, and will be treated with strong penalties.

In explaining the reach of the new legal proposals, Minister Chang noted that the gun is the weapon of choice for predominantly young men **“who find poser in the trigger of a gun”**.

According to the Minister, the risk of being apprehended while in possession of illegal firearms and ammunition outweighs the consequences and that the current legislative framework provides no disincentive for criminals, and those who support their activities to hand over the illegal guns.

Jamaica has recorded an average 1,270 murders annually over the last 25 years – the vast majority committed with illegal guns.

Said Minister Chang: **“The Government’s multifaceted approach has included making significant investments in building out police capacity to investigate and conduct targeted operations based on credible intelligence. We have begun to see the results, with the recent gun finds.”**

“The people of Jamaica can be assured that this investment in the police force will continue as a fundamental aspect of our national security response,” he added.

Consequently, all guns that have not been subject to the local regulatory regime are considered prohibited firearms, and will be treated with strong penalties. This regime includes all unregulated firearms and connected activities, such as illicit trade, manufacture, stockpiling, possession and their use.

Minister Chang pointed out that the framework will be more robust and will comprise two (2) regimes: one to treat with prohibited weapons and the other dealing with firearms duly registered by the authorities.

Further, Clause 19 of the Bill provides that the Minister may declare a firearms amnesty by order subject to affirmative resolution.

“The amnesty would allow persons who are in possession of illegal firearms to surrender these firearms and ammunition to the state without prosecution,” Minister Chang said.

He stated that as the Government advances its thrust to **“get every illegal gun”** it is the administration’s intention to provide citizens with an opportunity to surrender their illegal guns as soon as this new Bill is signed into law.

The Bill has been welcomed by the Opposition, and now awaits approval from the Senate and a Joint Select Committee of Parliament to commence deliberations.

“I look forward to the support of the Members in pursuing this expeditious yet clinical review of the Bill as we bring into law a stronger, more robust Firearms Act,” Minister Chang said.