



**PRESS STATEMENT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Government to Address Incidents of Violence Against and Perpetrated by
Youth**

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security and Peace, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang, is expressing deep concern over a number of serious incidents of violence reported since the start of September, including violence against children and young people, as well as violence perpetrated by young people.

The Minister's concern follows the fatal stabbing of a 13-year-old girl in Flanker, St. James, on Thursday, September 3, during an altercation involving other teenage females.

Since the start of September, there have been four reported incidents involving fatal stabbing or chopping, including the St. James incident. There have also been two reported cases of rape, including the abduction and rape of a 10-year-old girl from the gates of Mineral Heights Primary School in Clarendon on Tuesday (September 8) and the rape of an older woman in Lionel Town, Clarendon.

Dr. Chang expressed condolences to the family of the 13-year-old and to all persons affected by these incidents, while emphasising the seriousness of the recent reports.

“These incidents are deeply troubling. When our children and other vulnerable members of society become victims of such violence, the impact extends beyond the individual and their families. It affects the sense of safety in our communities and threatens the future of our country,” Dr. Chang said.

The Minister noted that the circumstances surrounding the St. James stabbing, including reports that the conflict began through interactions on social media, have highlighted the need for greater attention to the way young people use and interact on social media platforms.

He said the Government will examine measures to better manage social media use among youth, particularly where online disputes and interactions can contribute to real-world conflict and violence.

The recent incidents also highlight the need for a differentiated approach to violence prevention and intervention. While the Jamaica Constabulary Force continues its efforts to confront gang violence, organised criminality and other serious crimes, violence involving children and young people, including incidents of interpersonal conflict and violence perpetrated by youth,



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requires complementary interventions focused on prevention, early intervention, social support and community engagement.

The Government will therefore pursue a series of coordinated approaches to address the different forms and drivers of violence, with increased coordination among case managers operating in affected schools and communities.

These efforts require collaboration with business councils, faith-based organisations and other community stakeholders to strengthen coordination, information-sharing and community support, and to ensure that appropriate interventions are activated where young people and vulnerable persons may be at risk.

In response to the recent reports of sexual violence in Clarendon, a delegation from the Community Safety and Security Branch of the Jamaica Constabulary Force will be deployed to the parish to examine the incidents of domestic violence and violence against youth and identify opportunities for strengthened intervention and support.

The Minister said the Government's response must combine decisive action against those who commit serious crimes with measures to prevent violence and address the circumstances in which it develops.

“We must be able to mitigate and eliminate the factors that allow violence to take root, while ensuring that those who commit these serious crimes face the full force of the law. We will root out criminal elements and give no room for them to gain a foothold in our communities,” he said.

The Ministry of National Security and Peace is in the process of scaling up the Peace portfolio as part of the Government's broader approach to building safer and more resilient communities.

He said the Peace agenda will complement the work of the security forces by strengthening violence prevention, conflict resolution, early intervention and community-based approaches to safety.

“The protection of our children and vulnerable citizens requires all of us to play our part. Government will continue to strengthen the systems and partnerships needed to prevent violence, protect our people and build a safer Jamaica,” Dr. Chang said.

The Minister urged parents, educators, community leaders, faith-based organisations and other stakeholders to remain vigilant and to seek appropriate intervention where there are signs of bullying, threats, escalating conflict or other behaviours that may place children and young people at risk.