



**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, January 18, 2022

Government supports JCF in moving aggressively against criminals in Westmoreland
- Minister Chang

Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of National Security, the Hon. Dr. Horace Chang, says that in light of the surge in violent crimes, particularly in Westmoreland, the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) with the full support of the Government, is moving aggressively to attack criminal elements on all fronts.

An uptick in murders and other gun-related crimes has prompted the Prime Minister to declare a Zone of Special Operation (ZOSO) for sections of Savanna-la-Mar, Westmoreland.

In addition to the ZOSO, Minister Chang said the Government will be examining what other law enforcement tools can be brought to bear on the crime situation in Westmoreland, and how existing tools can be combined with the Zone of Special Operation to reduce violence, and restore peace and public order.

He said the declaration of the ZOSO is yet another such tools with which to focus attention on the most violent districts in Westmoreland's most urban, and that the security forces will not relent in its effort to bring law, order and public safety to the people of Westmoreland.

“It will not only restore order in the limited geographical area, but it is also designed to disrupt the gangsters who operate from this area,” said Minister Chang.

Statistics indicate that the national homicide rate is moving ahead of that of 2021 in a significant way. Three parishes and four divisions account for this uptick: St James, Westmoreland and St Catherine (North and South divisions). Of the 14 parishes, Westmoreland has had the highest increase in 2022 over 2021.

Minister Chang said that the JCF is taking decisive action to not only curb the rise of crime in Westmoreland but also to restore order and public safety.

“Curfews, cordons, additional officers to the geographic divisions, and specialized units to apprehend perpetrators, have been sent to Westmoreland,” Minister Chang said, adding that while there has been some success, more is required.

“Dispersing them shouldn't be a problem, but like rats scurrying from their holes they are easier to identify and apprehend.”

He said the Government will continue to strengthen the Westmoreland Police Division within the limited resources that are available, in the short term.

Minister Chang said the Government will ensure that all resources (human and technological), are made available to the brave men and women of the JCF **“to overcome this cancer of violence, especially in Westmoreland”**.