

Office of the Director of Public Affairs &
Communication

Email:
ministryofnationalsecurity@mns.gov.jm
Phone: (876)754-0030 | (876)564-5925



Ministry of National Security
NCB North Tower
2 Oxford Road
Kingston 5
Jamaica

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ZOSO Act amendments will enable expansion of transformative work in challenged communities, declares Minister Chang

Deputy Prime and Minister of National Security, the Hon. Dr Horace Chang successfully piloted seventeen amendments of the Law Reform (Zones of Special Operations) (Special Security and Community Development Measures) Act, through the Lower House of Parliament, which he says is to enable the restoration of good public order in challenged communities.

Minister Chang said that the amended Act will enable the continued expansion of **“the transformative work”**, by restoring good order, and public safety within these challenged communities and to support and restore hope to the citizens.

All the amendments were approved and passed in the House of Representatives yesterday (September 26, 2023).

The Minister told Parliament that the Zones of Special Operations have been, and continue to be, a critical component of the government’s crime prevention and crime reduction strategy for development in these communities.

“The law is aimed at curbing the nation’s crime through security force occupation of vulnerable communities while aiming also to preserve human rights during the period of occupation,” Minister Chang said.

He stated also that all seven Zones continue to advance along the Clear, Hold and Built path, with the Mount Salem division being at the most advanced stage – The build phase and while the others are at various stages of the programme, **“the people are experiencing the immediacy of the transformative effect in their community and the restoration of hope that comes with the ZOSOs”**.

The Security Minister said the Act is a far-reaching piece of legislation, designed to guide the transformation in several communities that are constantly challenged and volatile.

“I am confident that the amendments to the ZOSO Act will bring about the kind of results we wish for,” Minister Chang said.

He asserted that the government has changed the focus of work in vulnerable communities from project-based social intervention to holistic social transformation programmes, stating that “**we have strategically targeted vulnerable and volatile communities to ensure sustained transformation within these areas**”.

Mount Salem, Denham Town, August Town, Greenwich Town, Norwood, Parade Gardens and sections of Savanna La-Mar are all designated ZOSO areas.

Some of the adopted amendments by the Joint Select Committee include the increase of the period of extension from 120 days to 180 days, and to vest authority to impose a curfew in the Commissioner of Police and the Chief of Defence Staff, or their designates not below the rank of Assistant Commissioner of Police and Lieutenant Colonel respectively.

A further proposal to introduce the requirement for a notice to be displayed upon the establishment of a cordon and the imposition of a curfew to enable persons in the Zones to be made aware of those activities, was also adopted.

Minister Chang praised the work of the Joint Select Committee, stating that it enabled a more robust and relevant Bill. This, in response to the country’s current cultural and economic dynamics; particularly of those who reside in vulnerable communities.