



**PRESS RELEASE  
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**Tuesday, September 21, 2021**

**Government Treating Youth Crime Engagement with Urgency**

Youth engagement in crime and violence is of grave concern to the Government and a practice that is being treated as a matter of national urgency, declared Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, the Hon. Dr. Horace Chang.

The Minister, who was keynote speaking at the opening ceremony of United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Youth Summit on Crime & Violence – World Peace Day, said the Government has **“taken a strong policy position and repositioned social investment as an all-of-government priority in order to cauterize youth participation in crime”**.

He said the Government is taking the necessary steps to ensure that social development initiatives are relevant to the targeted population and impactful on crime.

Using data to underscore the urgency and focus of the Government's social investment thrust on the youth, Minister Chang said that on average, 40 per cent of all known murder offenders in Jamaica are young men, aged 15 to 24 years, which translates into 4 of every ten persons arrested for murder are young men between the ages 15-24 years.

Further, the Minister indicated that crime data over the past decade shows that increasingly, the victims and the perpetrators of category one crimes fall within the 15 to 24 age range.

In 2020, 16 per cent of murder victims were between the ages of 15 and 24. While in 2019 and 2018, the percentage youth victims relative to murder were 21 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively. Youths within this age range are taking up leadership roles within violent gangs and are being groomed by dons and other violence producers to commit gun and other violent crimes.

**“This data is clearly telling us that our youths are at risk. Research further confirms that the school drop-out rate among inner city boys can be as high as 70 per cent. These are the boys and young men that anthropologist refer to as recruitable to gangs,”** said Minister Chang.

In collaboration with key partners - the Jamaica National Service Corps (JNSC), a Music, Sports and Technology Programme, an Articulated Truck Driving Programme, and a Music Intervention Programme have been implemented and are geared towards interrupting the cycle of crime among our youths.

**“The Ministry of National Security is working closely with the relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government to ensure that there is a safe environment within which to operate the new eco-system of social change,”** said Minister Chang.