

Statement by Hon Peter Bunting MP, Minister of National Security

November 3, 2015

It is important to correct some inaccurate and misleading information that has been put into the public domain regarding national security and in particular, allegations of low morale in the Police Force as evidenced by the rate of attrition in 2015.

The Ministry of National Security has consistently called for a national partnership in support of the Security Forces in the fight against crime and murders. The problem of crime and violence is a longstanding problem, deeply rooted in the breakdown of critical social institutions. There is a growing consensus among well thinking Jamaicans that this is an issue that requires a united and national response in which we speak and act first as Jamaicans and always in the best interest of our citizens.

The Leader of the Opposition at a political rally over the weekend made unfortunate and inflammatory statements that are completely out of step with this approach. He is quoted in the media as saying that ***“if you keep the PNP in power, the truth is that you could lose your life...the truth is that the next murder victim could be you.”***

This is an unfortunate departure from the standards of public comment on an issue of such grave importance. To further suggest that citizens would be risking their lives in voting against the Jamaica Labour Party is taking the politicization of crime to a new low. This behaviour is unbecoming of someone who aspires to the highest political office.

The Leader of the Opposition continued along this path, when he again took to the political platform with incorrect and misleading information regarding the Police. Using figures that have no relationship to the truth, he lamented the departure of over eight hundred (800) policemen from the Force since the start of the year. I am at a loss to understand why Mr. Holness would be so anxious to fabricate figures that would only have the effect of further demoralizing the honourable men and women of the Police who he claims to be so concerned about, when the correct information was readily available from the Police themselves.

The truth is that so far this year three hundred and sixteen (316) persons have left the Police Force, these figures are published in the weekly Force Orders, and are available to those interested in providing accurate information to the people of Jamaica. (53 retired, 240 resigned, 22 died). The figure for last year was Three hundred and forty one (341). Additionally, 32 District Constables resigned, seven retired, and one died of natural causes. I wish to remind the Leader of the Opposition that the figures for the years 2010 and 2011 were 426 and 449 respectively, possibly the two highest years for attrition in the history of the JCF.

Those of us who have the privilege of serving the People of Jamaica, must hold ourselves to the highest standards of accuracy and truthfulness if we are to provide effective leadership in these challenging times.

I assure this Honourable House and the People of Jamaica that the Security Forces remain committed to tracking down, apprehending and bringing to justice the vicious, cold hearted

criminals who have been murdering our fellow citizens. They deserve our support, they are the last line of defence between law abiding Jamaicans and the criminals that threaten our future.

The criminals need to know that we are united in opposition to them and stand firmly together as Jamaicans in our fight for a safer country. We should avoid irresponsible statements that may give them comfort. There should be no room for scare mongering on political platforms in the effort to keep our communities and our citizens safe.

I appeal to the Opposition, to desist from pulling the security forces into the partisan political fray. I again invite the Leader of the Opposition, as I have done so many times on the floor of this House, to join with us and the rest of Jamaica in a sincere partnership to support the national security forces, in order to defeat the criminals and to keep our country safe.”

Even as we prepare for election campaigning, we all still need to be mindful of the national interest and refrain from damaging the reputation of Jamaica, the commitment of our public servants, or the truth.