

**Speech
by
Hon. Robert Montague, MP., Minister of National Security
Tuesday August 22, 2017
for the
Closing Session
of
the Training of JCF Station Pastors
for
Counselling of Domestic Violence Perpetrators**

Please check against delivery

It is indeed my pleasure to be here today. Today marks an occasion in which we are taking proactive steps towards dealing with a serious issue. Domestic Violence is a serious issue and a serious crime.

There are too many cases of domestic crimes in our society. 37% of murders in Jamaica are as a result of Domestic Violence. It is one of the most underreported crimes. We do not even know what the true figure is. I am sure that everyone here today has been in some way exposed to domestic violence at some point in their lives.

Too many times people argue about the simplest of things and it ends up in critical injury or death. It breaks up and destroys families. Many perpetrators of domestic crimes were once victims themselves. It leads to a vicious cycle. When a young boy grows up seeing his father beat his mother, it is highly likely that he may do the same. Something has to be done to break the cycle. Families are killing each other over senseless arguments.

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There is no discrimination when it comes to domestic violence. Perpetrators come in all shapes and sizes. They come from uptown and downtown. They are in every profession.

This Government is unequivocally committed to crime prevention. One of the ways in which this is being done is by not only looking at the crimes and the victims but also the offenders. One of the strategies in the Ministry of National Security's Five-Pillar Crime Strategy is Crime Prevention through Social Development. Social interventions have to happen if we want to prevent and reduce the incidents of domestic violence.

The method of dealing with domestic violence was traditionally concentrated on the victims. It is not enough to protect the victim and hold the perpetrators accountable, but intervention must be done with the perpetrators themselves to reduce and eliminate reoccurrence. There must be rehabilitation. The training of specialized counsellors is an important step to reduce the incidence of domestic violence.

Bringing the perpetrators to justice and raising the awareness is just part of the battle. Working to rehabilitate the offenders is critical. The cycle of abuse must be broken and without social intervention it will continue.

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Like other crimes, many people know of domestic abuse but won't talk. It is not their business. Let me tell you, it is everybody's business. We cannot continue to let our women, our children, our young and old suffer at these hands of these abusers. We must talk and we must act. We must look at the root cause and address those issues. Why is this happening, what are the causes and why does it continue?

There is absolutely no excuse for anyone to commit an act of domestic violence and we as a society need to understand that. It is not right, it is not acceptable, it must not be allowed. This message needs to be clear, starting with our youths. Messages of respect for others and respect for yourself needs to be loud and clear.

We have trained over 200 pastors and peer counsellors attached to the JCF to counsel these perpetrators. It will be through social intervention strategies such as these that will help us to reduce these incidents of crime. We have to dig deep, we have to infiltrate into the minds and psyche of these persons. If we don't understand the problems, we cannot change them.

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We have invested in training these persons in order to reduce and prevent any further domestic violence crimes. You know what they say, “prevention is better than cure”.

The Ministry of National Security has spearheaded, contributed to and supported the development and implementation of several interventions and programmes. These initiatives aim at reducing risks and eventually violent crimes through the engagement of individuals and their communities. Today demonstrates our commitment to this cause.

Technical teams spanning various Ministries, Departments and Agencies have been set up to guide the monitoring of the achievement of our goals and objectives of ultimately making Jamaica a safe and secure nation. This programme will be evaluated and monitored with specific indicators to ensure that the intervention is having the desired results.

Reports must be submitted as to the number of domestic violence cases reported and also the number of domestic violence interventions that took place. The training of the

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persons from this programme will allow more personnel to be available for domestic violence intervention. Our aim is to resolve conflicts and save lives.

Today we are playing our part towards the path of prevention. Let us try and stop it before it starts and stop it so that it does not continue. We will and we can make Jamaica a safer place.