



**Statement to Parliament on the Zones of Special
Operations (Parade Gardens)**

by

The Honourable Dr. Horace Chang, CD, MP

Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of National Security

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OPENING REMARKS

Madam Speaker, the Kingston Central Police Division recorded seventy-nine (79) murders for 2021, an increase of 55% when compared to the corresponding period of 2020.

The ongoing violence and its impact in the Division has extended to several communities to include the Downtown Business District – the location of critical government institutions.

The Parade Gardens Community is one of sixteen communities that fall within the Downtown Development Area that has been prioritized for immediate intervention.

Without question, the level of violence in this community of approximately 3,000 residents, is having significant impact on the state of being of the residents, and children in particular. Having lost sixteen (16) lives in 2021 at the hands of criminals, Parade Gardens is among the top ten communities nationally, with the highest number of murders.

This has raised the level of concern for the Government and the security forces, which saw it prudent to declare a Zone of Special Operations in the Community.

Madam Speaker, the driving factors are well known; gang warfare compounded by the possession of illegal firearms and the inability to resolve conflicts peacefully. Socio-economic and urban decay overtime has contributed to the lack of community development which ranks the community among the most vulnerable in Jamaica.

A baseline study¹ of the community in June 2020 indicates that Parade Gardens shares the demographic characteristics associated with the most vulnerable and volatile communities in the country. Having just over half of the population (51.3%) aged 30 and younger, places this community at a high-risk factor. This, based on the fact that

¹ A Review of Report '**Conducting Baseline Studies for Seventeen Vulnerable and Volatile Communities in support of the Community Renewal Programme Financing Agreement No.: GA 43/JAM Community Report Parade Gardens**' June 2020 (The Baseline Study of 17 Vulnerable and Volatile Communities in support of the Community Renewal Programme commenced on September 11, 2018. Between March 2019 and June 30, 2019.

children, our boys in particular, are among the most vulnerable because they are targeted for gang recruitment. High levels of employment and low educational attainment have further stifled economic and social advancement of many residents.

Like many other challenged communities, Parade Gardens has benefited from a number of social intervention programmes over the years, yet with little to show for it. Through the implementation of the clear-hold-build strategy of the ZOSO, we will provide the community with a respite from violence and create an environment for long-term development. **The objective is to save lives, restore order and pursue transformative action.**

Over the next 60-days residents can look forward to further intensified security operations, and increased community engagement by security personnel. This, as they pursue

strong community partnership in ridding the area of violence producers.

Madam speaker, Zones of Special Operations do not end in sixty (60) days. They are subject to Parliamentary review every sixty days to ensure that the work progresses through to the HOLD and BUILD phases. These periodic reviews facilitate transparency. It is the means by which the residents of Parade Gardens can hold the government accountable for the requisite social investment and operational work to be carried out as planned.

C O N C L U S I O N

Madam Speaker, the residents of Parade Gardens are tired of the violence. Their desire is to live free of fear, improve their social standing, and raise their children in a peaceful environment. The government is implementing the measures required to restore peace and good order to Parade Gardens. Thank you.