



MINISTERIAL BRIEF

Honourable Dr. Horace Chang, CD, MP
Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of National Security

Houses of Parliament

November 1, 2022

TABLING OF THE
FIREARMS (PROHIBITION, RESTRICTION AND REGULATION) (FIREARMS
AMNESTY) ORDER, 2022

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FIREARMS (PROHIBITION, RESTRICTION AND REGULATION) (FIREARMS
AMNESTY) Order, 2022**

INTRODUCTION

1. Madam Speaker, the matter for consideration before this Honourable House this afternoon is the **Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) (Firearms Amnesty) Order 2022** and Resolution. Pursuant to the powers conferred on the Minister by Section 19 of the **Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation), Act, 2022**, the Minister may declare a firearms amnesty if satisfied that:
 - (a) the amnesty may result in the reduction in the number of illegally possessed firearms or ammunition in Jamaica; and
 - (b) it is in the public interest.

2. Madam Speaker, the Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Act was gazetted on October 13, 2022 and by way of Order dated November 1, 2022 the Act is now in force and save for Part VII all sections of the Act are in operation. In this regard the penalty regime associated with prohibited firearms that is, those for which no firearm authorization has been granted is in full effect. This Honourable House will recall that the penalty for breach of offences under part of the Act dealing with the prohibited regime are particularly punitive, ranging from mandatory term of imprisonment of fifteen years to life imprisonment.

3. When I had tabled the Firearms Bill for debate in September, I signaled my intention to declare a firearms amnesty as soon as the Act was brought into operation. This amnesty would allow persons who may be in possession of illegal firearms or ammunition or those for which no licence nor authorisation exists, the opportunity to surrender these firearms or ammunition to the State without the fear of prosecution. Madam Speaker, under the amnesty pursuant to this Order, any person who voluntarily surrenders or discloses the location of any firearm or ammunition during the amnesty period **shall not be charged with any offence relating to illegal possession, custody, or control of that firearm or ammunition.**

4. The amnesty will run for fourteen (14) days and is slated to commence on the 5th day of November 2022, and will end at midnight on the 19th of November 2022. This means Madam Speaker, that once the amnesty expires we can expect the full force of the law to be applied to anyone found in possession of illegal firearm or ammunition
5. Madam Speaker, firearm amnesties such as the one subject of this Order, are not unique to Jamaica because they have been used successfully around the world as an operational tool to reduce the high levels of armed violence resulting from the proliferation of firearms and ammunition. For the last 25 years Jamaica recorded on average 1,270 murders annually, the vast majority being committed with illegal firearms. The firearm is the weapon of choice for murders and other acts of crime and armed violence in Jamaica. The proliferation of illegal firearms continues to hinder national growth and advancement, and has become the biggest threat to citizens' peace and security. The security forces have maintained a steady rate of firearm seizures over the years. Since 2018, the security forces have taken more than 3,200 illegal firearms from the streets and in excess of 53,000 rounds of ammunition. Each year, they have seized upwards of 625 firearms. In fact, as at October 31, 2022, a total of 652 firearms have been seized. This represents an 11% increase over the 585 recorded for the similar period in 2021.
6. Madam Speaker, I want to emphasize that the aim of this measure is not to reveal the identities of the persons who comply with the amnesty. The amnesty is also intended to provide an opportunity for licence holders who are in possession of expired authorizations to surrender their weapons to the Authority. The conditions for the surrender of firearms or ammunition are outlined in the Order. Firearms or ammunition may be surrender to any sub-officer or senior sub-officer on duty at any police station; any designated officer at any FLA location or to an Attorney-at-Law on behalf an individual seeking the amnesty for the Attorney to deliver the firearm or ammunition to the nearest police station.
7. Madam Speaker, I am urging those possessing illegal firearms or ammunition to make full use of the amnesty, because when it expires on November 19, 2022, those who refuse to surrender

their firearms and ammunition, once convicted, will face stiff penalties. I look forward to the support of the members of this Honourable House.