

# Military rule - Jamaicans would put army in charge to curtail crime and corruption, says survey

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The majority of Jamaicans would support the temporary suspension of their rights and accept military rule under a coup in order to curtail high levels of crime and corruption.

That is the finding of a comparative study of democracy and governance, as part of the Political Culture of Democracy in Jamaica Survey in the Americas 2016-17.

Professor Anthony Harriott of the Institute of Criminal Justice and Security at the University of the West Indies, Mona, presented the findings in Kingston yesterday.

The results from the survey reveal a steady increase in support for military rule in Jamaica under extraordinary circumstances in the last 10 years. Approximately 56.4 per cent of Jamaicans in 2017 support a military coup under extraordinary circumstances, an increase from 39.7 per cent in 2006 and the previous high of 49.2 per cent in 2014.

Among Latin American countries, 59.3 per cent of Jamaicans would support a coup under high crime, while 53.2 per cent say they would support a coup under high-corruption circumstances. In Peru, using the same matrix, 55.3 per cent say they would want their military in charge of government under high-crime situations, while 23.3 per cent of Americans say they would support a coup under high-crime circumstances.

The Jamaican aspect of the study is part the Americas Barometer Survey implemented through the Latin American Population Project (LAPOP) and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Questions were posed to 1,515 Jamaicans during the period January 29-30, 2017.

"The data revealed the failures of law enforcement and the positive performance of the army in dealing with the extraordinary

crime situation that persisted since 2010 and which resulted in a 30 per cent decline in all serious crime immediately after their intervention," Harriott said.

"Importantly, I think we have to develop a keen eye for when incremental changes may mark a new development; a keen eye for when red flags are raised or when red lines are crossed. That can be done, not by dramatic movement but by also incremental changes in data points," argued Harriott. "I believe that this report suggests that we have crossed one such red line."

Jamaicans with higher levels of education and wealth, urban residents, males and older cohorts offer less support for a coup. In addition, less than half the population with post-secondary education levels, in the highest wealth quintile, or 56 years or older, support a military takeover when factored into demographics and socio-economic subgroups.

"The majority of Jamaicans are committed to democratic stability but I want to highlight that the evidence in this data suggests that when it comes to the attitude of our population in regards to the control and the management of the crime situation and corruption in our country, I believe that red line has been crossed," Harriott said.

"The Jamaican military, I think, is one of the best among developing countries. I think they are committed to democratic principles, so I don't expect anything spectacular to occur such as a military coup," he said.

The Jamaica Defence Force has been active in recent months having been called upon to support the police in the zones of special operations and the states of public emergency in Kingston, Montego Bay, St James and in Spanish Town and its environs to clamp down on murders and other crime.