

“Jamaica Parliament approves extension of state of public emergency”

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KINGSTON – The Jamaica parliament has approved an extension of the State of Public Emergency in the St Catherine North area after it had been imposed on March 18 in a bid to curb criminal activities there.

All 49 of the 61 legislators who were present in the Parliament when the vote was taken on Tuesday, agreed to extend the State of Public Emergency to July 3.

Prime Minister Andrew Holness declared the State of Public Emergency for St Catherine North on March 18 initially for 14 days after 48 people were killed between January 1 and March 18.



Last year, 136 people were killed in St Catherine North.

Opposition Leader Dr Peter Phillips, said the measure should be employed sparingly.

“In circumstances like this, where it is a response not to natural disaster of some sort, it is really an indication of the failure of policy to deal with the situation of repeated criminal violence,” Phillips said.

Prime Minister Holness said he is hoping for a “more clinical approach that would set out powers, we could call it enhanced powers...that would allow us to rapidly deploy them, without having to go through the procedures that we have to now do.”

Holness said the government will soon articulate its crime plan publicly, but he said there is a major step to be taken.

“The crime plan must include in it, something to say this Parliament agrees on a set of actions that we are carving out national security as an area where there is bipartisan support for policy.”

Meanwhile, a survey published here on Wednesday showed that the majority of Jamaicans would support the temporary suspension of the rights of citizens and accept military rule in order to curtail high levels of crime and corruption.

The survey, which is part of the Political Culture of Democracy in Jamaica Survey in the Americas 2016-17, was published in the Jamaica Gleaner after Professor Anthony Harriott of the Institute of Criminal Justice and Security at the University of the West Indies, Mona, presented the findings on Tuesday.

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.

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.

(CMC)