

Any means necessary - more Ja'cans agree that authorities can cross the line to catch criminals

jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20180329/any-means-necessary-more-jacans-agree-authorities-can-cross-line-catch

March 29, 2018

Published: Thursday | March 29, 2018 | 12:00 AM Livern Barrett/ Senior Gleaner Writer



Rudolph Brown

Professor Trevor Munroe (centre), executive director, National Integrity Actio, speaking at the release of the results of the 2016/17 round of the biennial study on the Political Culture of Democracy in Jamaica conducted by the Latin American Public Opinion Project's Political Culture of Democracy in Jamaica and in the Americas. The results of the study were released at the Knutsford Court Hotel on Tuesday.

Amid the escalating murder rate, which has claimed more than 6,000 lives during the last five years, a regional research group has found that the number of Jamaicans willing to allow law enforcement authorities to "cross the line" in order to catch suspected criminals is increasing.

The Latin America Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), in a report based on a survey it conducted last January, says that 27.9 per cent of respondents agreed that authorities could cross the line to catch criminal suspects.

According to the researchers, this represents an increase of more than 100 per cent in the 13 per cent of Jamaicans who agreed, a decade ago, that authorities could cross the line. The survey, which received

assistance from the United States Agency for International Development and the University of the West Indies, is based on interviews with 1,500 Jamaicans who are eligible to vote.

The finding came as no surprise for one Jamaican law enforcement official who theorised that as the state machinery fails to curtail the escalating criminality, citizens will begin to look for alternative means. "It becomes a condition of the mind where (people are thinking) by any means necessary," the official said.

"Maybe out of frustration, they are saying, 'Anyway you get to them (suspected criminals) ... if you have to kill some people or lock up some people for long periods without trials'. It wouldn't surprise me that people are thinking this way," the official reasoned.

According to police statistics, 6,363 persons have been killed in Jamaica since 2013, including 1,616 last year. The LAPOP report indicates that 13.6 per cent of Jamaicans agreed in 2008 that authorities could cross the line to catch criminal suspects. Since then, the research group said, that number steadily increased to 23.3 per cent in 2010 and to 25.1 per cent in 2012.

It noted that Jamaicans between the age of 18 to 45 years old are more likely to support such a move than those 56 years old and over. The researchers found, too, that the attitude of most Jamaicans towards the police is changing, with the average level of trust in the police climbing to 43.9 per cent last year. This is 10 percentage points higher than in 2014. The survey found, too, that 65 per cent of respondents expressed a willingness to "work with the police in their community to combat crime". In addition, the LAPOP report says that nearly 83 per cent of Jamaicans expressed the view that a closer working relationship between the police and the community would reduce crime "a lot" or "somewhat."