



Statement in support of the Jamaican Bar Association (JAMBAR) and the Advocates Association of Jamaica (AAJ) in their call for an urgent and structured review of the firearms legislation in Jamaica

By a letter dated 28th September 2026 sent to the Honourable Delroy Chuck, KC, MP, Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs in Jamaica, JAMBAR and the AAJ support strong action against serious firearms crime while calling for a clearer, fairer, and more proportionate legal framework.

JAMBAR and the AAJ urge an urgent, structured review of the Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Act, 2022 (the Act) and related sentencing laws. Both organisations confirm and support the core purpose of the Act: suppressing illegal firearms, controlling and prohibiting stockpiling and manufacture of firearms, and providing a robust system of penalties for firearm use in serious offences.

In their letter, the two organisations express concern that the current provisions of the Act can treat materially different conduct in the same way. In particular, the broad definitions of firearm, prohibited weapon, imitation firearm, and components may expose legitimate possession or use to penalties intended for serious criminal conduct.

The letter makes a number of recommendations. These include:

- Suggesting definitions and offences for firearms, prohibited weapons, imitation firearms, parts, and accessories;
- Advocating for a separate, proportionate regime for imitation firearms, including lawful permits for theatrical, film, television, educational, and similar uses, while preserving severe sanctions for threats, violence, trafficking, and crime;
- Requesting amendment to ensure legitimate imitation-firearm possession is not exposed to the same consequences as criminal possession or stockpiling;
- Calling for improved permitting for importation, possession, transport, and controlled production use of imitation firearms; and
- Consideration of proportionate sentencing, and appropriate treatment of children and reform of plea-discount so that early guilty pleas and exceptional circumstances can be addressed fairly and efficiently.

The letter also calls for a comprehensive review and human-rights impact assessment, taking account of constitutional rights, children's rights, proportionality, and the practical administration of justice.

The CLA recognises that the letter is a thoughtful and responsible contribution which supports a legal framework that provides the strongest penalties for violence, intimidation, and criminal use of firearms, while ensuring that the legislation differentiates lawful and non-violent conduct.

The Commonwealth Lawyers Association is an international professional legal organisation whose primary object is to promote the rule of law throughout the Commonwealth by ensuring that the people of the Commonwealth are served by an independent and efficient legal profession, and to promote the administration of justice and the protection of human rights in accordance with the Harare Declaration, the Latimer House Principles and the Commonwealth Charter. The CLA considers that the letter advances important rule-of-law principles: people should be able to understand what conduct is prohibited, legitimate activities should be clearly identified and permitted, and sentences should reflect the actual nature and seriousness of the offence.

As the Commonwealth (Latimer House) Principles recognise, an independent, organised legal profession is an essential component in the protection of the rule of law.

The CLA supports JAMBAR and the AAJ in their call for reform of this legislation.

The CLA considers that the reforms suggested would strengthen public confidence by making the Act more precise and proportionate without compromising public safety.

The CLA reaffirms its commitment to the rule of law throughout the Commonwealth and stands ready to assist, consistent with its mandate, in any review of the Act.

8th October 2026

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