

THE JAMAICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

President: Donovan C. Walker
Vice President: Sherry-Ann McGregor
Secretary: M. Maurice Manning
Treasurer: Jacqueline Cummings

78-80 Harbour Street
Kingston, Jamaica W.I.
Telephone: (876) 967-3394
967-9034
Fax: (876) 967-3783
E-mail: jba@flowja.com
Website: www.jambar.org

8th February, 2016

By E-mail Only.

To:- All Media Houses, Jamaica

From:- The Jamaican Bar Association

Attention:- The Editors

Dear Sirs,

Re:- Jamaican Bar Association calls for fair, just and peaceful general elections.

The Jamaican Bar Association categorically denounces any threats or acts of violence in any form against politicians, political parties and their supporters. We raise extreme concern about, and condemn, the shooting that occurred last night at a political mass rally that left at least three persons dead and several injured.

While the reasons behind the shooting are unclear and are being investigated, and whether the shooting incident was politically motivated or not, the fact is that the shooting occurred during the speech of the Leader of the Opposition and resulted in his security detail removing him from the platform, bringing a premature end to that rally thus interfering with the democratic process on which the Jamaican system of political governance is founded. As Jamaicans we are better than this.

Our Association notes the swift condemnation of the shooting by both major political parties as well as the unequivocal stand against political violence that each party is taking in its commitment to respect and uphold the democratic process of elections to which our people are constitutionally entitled.

We urge the Jamaica Constabulary Force as well as the Office of the Political Ombudsman to immediately take all steps to intervene, investigate, identify, stop and prevent all acts of violence, intimidation, threats and corruption that could mar the political process. Likewise, political parties must not tolerate brutish and violent conduct by their members and supporters and should take steps to identify/root out persons who want to see a culture of political violence grow and thrive in our parties.

We urge Jamaicans citizens to freely participate in the political process as follows;

1. those who are qualified, duly registered and intend to vote, to cast their vote in a considered manner and not for graft, money or gifts,
2. to report all acts of political violence, intimidation, corruption and breaches of the political code of conduct to the police and/or the Political Ombudsman,
3. to volunteer and support civil society groups who monitor elections such as Citizens' Action for Free and Fair Elections (*CAFFE*),
4. call upon the aspirants for political office to participate in public debates so we can better understand their manifestos, policies and to observe their conduct and demeanor when under media and public scrutiny, and
5. those who are active supporters of political parties to support your parties in the best democratic traditions and to do so lawfully and peacefully, avoiding participation in acts of violence, intimidation, corruption and any breach of agreed codes of political conduct.

We encourage the political parties and the Jamaica Debates Commission to get on with arranging debates by the political contenders and holding these debates before the holding of general elections.

The Jamaican Bar Association supports fair and free general elections as this is crucial to the growth and survival of our democracy.

Yours sincerely,

JAMAICAN BAR ASSOCIATION
DONOVAN C. WALKER - PRESIDENT