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PRESS RELEASE

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**INVESTIGATE, PROSECUTE CHILD ABUSERS,
CHILD MURDERERS SWIFTLY, IMPARTIALLY**

-- HEAR THE CHILDREN'S CRY

- **Inability to enforce child protection laws helping to escalate abuse**
- **Parliament, Government need to fix the problem now**
- **Time to send the message that Jamaica is serious about child protection.**

Hear The Children's Cry is calling on the Government and the Parliament to address the alarming plight of Jamaica's abused children, and to address this as the top national priority that it is.

Citing a bloody and ongoing series of child murders, including several in the past few days, plus serious levels of child sexual abuse across the island, Betty Ann Blaine, outspoken Child Advocate and Founder of Hear The Children's Cry, is urging the State and the nation as a whole to respond effectively to what her organization continues to declare a national crisis.

"Child murderers and child sexual abusers are walking free," she points out, adding, "This country's inability to effectively enforce child protection laws and to bring perpetrators to justice, is one of the greatest contributors to the atrocious escalation of abuse in our land. One shameful example is the case of the abduction and murder of eleven year old Ananda Dean in 2009 – more than six years ago – this case has still not been prosecuted.

"Hear The Children's Cry and its Missing Children's Support Programme join other advocacy groups in an outraged cry for the authorities to act decisively now, to declare and to follow up with real action, that Jamaica has zero tolerance for child abuse. We demand that cases of

violence, sexual violence and other abuses against children be investigated and prosecuted with speed and without partiality.

“It is time to send the message that our country is serious about protecting our children,” Mrs. Blaine concludes.

Hear the Children’s Cry is a voluntary organization providing urgently needed services for children and young people. Established in 2002, it combines vigorous, high profile advocacy with practical programmes for children, families and youth. It established its multi-faceted **Missing Children’s Support Programme** in April 2009, with continuing support from Jamaica Yellow Pages.

This is Jamaica's only entity, public or private, providing counseling for the families of missing children, as well as for returned missing children. It works with the security forces to access statistics on missing children, analyzing and publishing these. It also carries out islandwide programmes of Safety Education in Schools and Parenting Education, and networks with other stakeholders serving the welfare of Jamaican children.

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