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PRESS RELEASE

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WE MUST ACT NOW, MR. PRIME MINISTER – TO SAVE OUR SCHOOLS!

- *Hear The Children's Cry calls for urgent action from the Prime Minister, to save Jamaica's schools from the growing crisis of violence at all levels*
- *Urging PM to call a multi-level meeting of critical stakeholders in the education sector, to result in:*
- *A School Safety Action Plan to be put into operation immediately*

Following an alarming series of incidents of violence in Jamaican schools in recent weeks involving, a principal, teachers, parents and students, Hear The Children's Cry is calling on Prime Minister Andrew Holness to take urgent action to save Jamaica's schools.

“We urge the Prime Minister to convene an emergency meeting of critical stakeholders to deal, on an immediate basis, with what is not just a crisis but a rapidly worsening crisis,” says Children's Advocate Betty Ann Blaine, Founder of the child advocacy organization.

“This needs to be a multi-level meeting, and it needs to produce an Action Plan to be put into operation on an immediate basis” Mrs. Blaine advises, adding, “We recommend that it include representatives of groups, ie the Jamaica Teacher's Association, the Jamaica Association of Principals, National Parent Teacher Association, National Association of Deans of Discipline, Jamaica Association of Guidance Counselors in Education, student representatives, Office of the Children's Advocate, Child Protection and Family Services Agency, the Jamaica Umbrella Groups of Churches, other NGOs working within the education sector, representatives of the private sector, and of course, the security forces.

“We do not have to re-invent the wheel as far as proven strategies which can be drawn upon: Peace and Love in Schools (PALS) and the Dispute Resolution Foundation have done some excellent work in our schools. Hear The Children’s Cry is willing to share our holistic Prevent A Drop Out Programme template, which has been successfully piloted in a secondary school which was facing many challenges.

“Hear The Children’s Cry supports similar concerns which are being expressed by concerned community and media leaders. Let us all demand as well as contribute to immediate positive action to redeem our school system, restore peace and protect our children and those working to educate them!”

Mrs. Blaine concludes,

“This is a crisis we must not allow to get any further out of hand. It will hurt and hamper our young people, and destroy our nation.”

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