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Summary prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in accordance with paragraph 15 (c) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1

Jamaica

The present report is a summary of seven stakeholders’ submissions to the universal periodic review. It follows the structure of the general guidelines adopted by the Human Rights Council. It does not contain any opinions, views or suggestions on the part of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), nor any judgement or determination in relation to specific claims. The information included herein has been systematically referenced in endnotes and, to the extent possible, the original texts have not been altered. Lack of information or focus on specific issues may be due to the absence of submissions by stakeholders regarding these particular issues. The full texts of all submissions received are available on the OHCHR website. The report has been prepared taking into consideration the four-year periodicity of the first cycle of the review.

* The present was not edited before being sent to United Nations translation services.
I. Background and framework

A. Scope of international obligations

1. Joint Submission 1 (JS1) and Joint Submission 2 (JS2) stated that Jamaica has signed, but not yet ratified, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. They also stated that Jamaica withdrew from the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1998, and that Jamaica has not signed and ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.


B. Constitutional and legislative framework

3. Amnesty International (AI) reported that a new Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms was presented to Parliament in April 2009 and remains under consideration. The Charter, which is intended to replace Chapter III of the Constitution, has been criticized by national human rights organizations on the grounds that it is too limited in scope and not the subject of public consultation.

4. JS2 reported that the electoral process was essentially unregulated and in many cases illegal financing determined political decision-making in a way that was neither transparent nor accountable. JS2 recommended inter alia the adoption of political campaign financing legislation that will provide for extensive disclosure of contributions, the auditing of accounts and strong sanctions for breaches.

C. Institutional and human rights infrastructure

5. JSI indicated that Jamaica has quite a few institutional and human rights structures, but none of them specifically address issues related to lesbians, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex persons, as well as sex workers, and very few of them address issues related to people living with HIV/AIDS.
D. Policy measures

6. JS1 reported cases of abuse and harassment of gay men and sex workers by police officers. It recommended that Jamaica provide training to all criminal justice officers in international human rights standards in relation to sexuality, sexual orientation and HIV/AIDS. Such training should be fully integrated into existing training programmes to all ranks and should also include the fundamentals of HIV transmission and care.

7. Youth Coalition for Sexual Reproductive Rights (YCSRR) stated that there were several mob related killings of lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans-gender persons, for which no one has been prosecuted. It recommended training for the police and other security forces on responding to violence against lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans-gender persons.

II. Promotion and protection of human rights on the ground

Implementation of international human rights obligations

1. Equality and non-discrimination

8. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) stated that although Jamaica has taken important steps in protecting the rights of women in relation to discrimination and violence, these efforts have yet to change the lives of many women who continue to face different forms of discrimination. Jamaica must act to translate its obligations under national and international law into practice.

9. JS2 indicated that the major problems facing women included domestic violence, gender inequality, stereotyped roles for men and women, slow pace of legal reform relating to anti-discrimination legislation and the lack of sexual harassment legislation, and economic reliance of women on men because of female poverty. It also stated that there was a lack of organised institutional support for women, and that women were subjected to religious teachings which continued to oppress them. JS2 recommended that Jamaica appoint a minister solely for women’s affairs and a broad based national commission to advise this minister, as well as a permanent legal advisor/gender specialist to focus on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; take concrete steps to increase the gainful employment of women and provide special education and employment outreach to rural women; and introduce a public education programme to prevent rapes and sexual crimes and provide support to the victims.

10. IACHR reported that HIV-infected persons were discriminated against in Jamaican society. Once their families and communities were made aware of their status, HIV infected persons were rejected from their homes and communities.

11. YCSRR stated that the legislation did not guarantee all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination, and recommended that Jamaica enact legislation which recognizes sexual orientation and gender identity as criteria for non-discrimination.

2. Right to life, liberty and security of the person

12. AI indicated that although the last execution was carried out as far back as 18 February 1988, death sentences continue to be handed down by the courts. At the end of 2009, there were four prisoners on death row. Support for the death penalty is high both among the general public and decision-makers. AI noted that Jamaica voted against the 2007 and 2008 United Nations General Assembly resolutions calling for a moratorium on executions. AI recommended to repeal all provisions allowing for the death penalty and to immediately declare a moratorium on all executions; to commute all death sentences to
terms of imprisonment; and pending abolition of the death penalty, to ensure rigorous application of international standards for fair trial in all death penalty cases.20

13. IACHR indicated that it was informed of a number of deaths which took place in circumstances consistent with extrajudicial executions at the hands of the police, often young men or boys from the inner cities, who in some instances were unarmed and posed no threat to the police, were the victims.21

14. IACHR stated that during its visit to Jamaica, it verified that there was an extremely high level of violence in Jamaica, and that Jamaica had one of the highest murder rates in the world.22 Jamaica’s response to this situation has been inadequate due to the absence of an effective policy to address and prevent violence, the failure to dedicate sufficient resources to the problem, and the absence of an effective response by the police, judiciary and other authorities.23

15. JS2 asserted that criminal gangs controlled communities and acted under the patronage of one or other of the political parties. These political connections made it difficult to progress in reducing violence.24 JS2 also stated that the actions of the police in attempting to control crime have lead to an even greater level of violence and insecurity.25

16. IACHR stated that it was informed that the police used excessive force and arbitrary arrest and detention.26

17. JS1 reported cases of gay men being taken into custody by the police and subsequently abused, and of sex workers being harassed, extorted and abused by the police and private citizens.27 In this regard, JS1 recommended that Jamaica ensure that all allegations of human rights abuses by law enforcement officials are investigated by an independent body.28

18. IACHR stated that it observed, during its visit to the St. Catherine Adult Correctional Centre that while there were positive measures put in place, the prison was overcrowded with up to four persons in a single cell. IACHR stated that the problem of overcrowding was even more critical in police holding cells and that it was particularly shocked by the inhumane conditions found at Hunts Bay police station, where the detainees, crowded in numbers of up to six persons per cell, lived among garbage and urine with no consideration for their dignity. IACHR recommended that Jamaica comply with applicable international human rights standards and take the necessary measures to resolve problems of overcrowding in prisons and police holding cells; improve the quantity and quality of food so as to ensure adequate nutrition; allocate more resources for medical care; and expand educational and cultural activities available to prisoners.29

19. JS2 also referred to problems of inhumane living conditions and overcrowding in prisons and police holding cells. It recommended that attention be given to strengthening the constitutional protections against detention in inhumane conditions; that there should be focus on providing rehabilitation programmes with appropriate programmes for specific categories of inmates; and that Jamaica keep its commitment to build proper detention facilities.30

20. IACHR stated that children were especially vulnerable to the widespread violence that affects Jamaican society. Children were targeted for kidnapping accompanied by murder and rape. It also stated that the Government’s child-care system suffered from disturbing levels of sexual, physical and mental abuse of children at the hands of caregivers, and urgently required reforms and additional resources.31

21. Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (GIEACPC) stated that in the home corporal punishment was lawful which was in accordance with the common law right to inflict “reasonable and moderate” punishment and neither the relevant statutory legislation32 nor the Constitution was interpreted as prohibiting corporal
punishment in childrearing.\textsuperscript{33} Corporal punishment was however prohibited in early childhood institutions (known as basic schools).\textsuperscript{34} Legislation which prohibited corporal punishment in all schools was under discussion and, in the interim, schools, were asked to refrain from using corporal punishment.\textsuperscript{35} In the penal system, corporal punishment was ruled unconstitutional by the Jamaican Court of Appeal in December 1998.\textsuperscript{36} GIEACPC indicated that as of July 2009, a bill had been drafted to repeal the Flogging Regulation Act (1903) and the Crime Prevention Act (1942), both of which provided for flogging and whipping of persons under the age of 18.\textsuperscript{37}

3. Administration of justice, including impunity, and the rule of law

22. IACHR stated that the high number of cases of civilians being shot by the police and the lack of accountability in many of these cases have contributed to a situation of impunity that undermined the credibility of the police and the confidence of the public. This lack of credibility, in turn, seriously limits the capacity of the police to respond to crime, creating a vicious cycle that must be broken if progress was to be made in the restoration of peace and order.\textsuperscript{38} According to IACHR, the lack of accountability for the abuses of the police has created an environment of fear and intimidation, which caused individuals to refrain from pursuing a legal remedy before the courts. This environment has been identified by the police and judicial authorities as a key challenge in obtaining witness testimony for criminal trials.\textsuperscript{39}

23. IACHR stated that impunity in the cases of lethal use of force by police was of special concern. Only a minimal number of police officers were charged in cases of police killings, and in the cases of those who were brought to trial the process was fraud with obstacles, and usually ended in acquittals. It stated that the Bureau of Special Investigations lacked the resources to investigate allegation of unlawful killings and abuse by police, was not proactive, and its officers remained employed in the police which generated the perception that the Bureau was not independent. IACHR emphasized that it was crucial that a new commission with independence and autonomy be established to investigate allegations against the police.\textsuperscript{40}

24. JS2 also reported cases of killings by the police. In this regard, it stated that there was a pattern of impunity for the police because of investigative inadequacies, lack of independence, severe problems in the functioning of the justice system which included lack of training of judges and the inadequate support for the administration of justice.\textsuperscript{41} JS2 stated that almost all investigations and prosecutions of fatal police shootings were perfunctory, inadequate, unsatisfactory and did not meet international standards.\textsuperscript{42} JS2 recommended \textit{inter alia} that Jamaica ensure diligent criminal investigation and prosecution of the police in cases where unlawful use of force and firearms resulted in killing of civilians. It also recommended that other countries assist Jamaica in the immediate implementation of a programme to reduce and prevent homicides and police killings as well as the excessive use of force by Jamaica Constabulary Force.\textsuperscript{43}

25. IACHR stated that there was an urgent need to reform the administration of justice, which had proven inefficient in responding to the needs of the people, and which contributed to the perpetration of crime by failing to hold alleged perpetrators accountable. Jamaica has also failed to provide basic due process to persons caught up in the criminal justice system, and that justice was administered with one standard for the rich and another for the poor.\textsuperscript{44}

26. IACHR indicated that the information it had gathered indicated that most of the institutions involved in the administration of justice lacked the necessary resources to perform their work, and that the system and procedures required major reform.\textsuperscript{45} There were serious limitations on access to competent representation for suspects or accused. IACHR stated that the Legal Aid Act that came into force in 2000 was a positive step.
However, in many instances, legal aid was not available to those who could not afford legal representation.\textsuperscript{46} IACHR stated that some arrested or detained persons waited days, weeks, and even months before they were brought before a judicial officer.\textsuperscript{47} On this issue, JS2 stated that there was unjustifiably long detention for suspects and limited access to legal aid. It recommended that these issues be resolved with improved administrative practices, enforcement of professional behaviour and increased resources, especially in regard to legal aid.\textsuperscript{48}

27. IACHR noted during its visit that while Jamaica stated that additional judges had been hired, a number of judicial authorities indicated that demand exceeded their capacity. Also, the court system suffered from serious deficiencies in specialized training and access to information. IACHR observed that some judges did not have current copies of the legislation they were required to apply, and that some didn’t have access to computers or the internet.\textsuperscript{49}

28. IACHR stated that both the Government and civil society recognized the urgent need to implement a comprehensive policy to address the serious deficiencies in the administration of justice. IACHR emphasised the importance of the work done by the Jamaican Justice System Reform Task Force and the urgent need to implement the key recommendations contained in its Preliminary Report, released in 2007.\textsuperscript{50}

29. JS2 stated that the judicial system failed to deliver timely and fair justice for reasons which include a lack of resources and a lack of political and judicial will. It stated that the Jamaican Justice System Reform had laudable goals towards the development of a modern, efficient and accountable justice system.\textsuperscript{51} JS2 recommended that Jamaica expeditiously implement the recommendations of the Jamaican Justice System Reform Task Force Report, with particular emphasis on ensuring the provision of adequate resources and independent administrative structures for the justice system.\textsuperscript{52}

30. JS2 also stated that there were overwhelming delays in the Coroner’s Court which lead to violation of the right to judicial remedy.\textsuperscript{53} It recommended that Jamaica urgently move to reform the processes of the Coroner’s Court and the provisions regarding jury selection.\textsuperscript{54}

31. IACHR and JS2 stated that conditions of detention of juveniles in police holding cells and detention centres did not comply with international standards and was also in contravention of national law. Juveniles were held in overcrowded facilities which lacked activities for children, and were kept together with adults.\textsuperscript{55} JS2 recommended that Jamaica: develop plans for each and every child in the custody of the State; separate children in need of care and protection from those accused or convicted of crimes; establish separate homes for different categories of children who are wards of the State, based on their needs; separate monitoring responsibilities for homes and places of safety for child protection and care responsibilities; put in place a policy and procedure for children who are wards of the State and make them aware of this procedure.\textsuperscript{56}

32. With regard to the conditions of children in state institutions, IACHR indicated that about 2400 children were housed in 57 children’s homes and places of safety supervised by Jamaica’s Child Development Agency. The child-care system suffered disturbing levels of sexual, physical and mental abuse of children at the hands of caregivers, and urgently required reforms and additional resources.\textsuperscript{57} JS2 indicated that the Office of the Children’s Advocate was understaffed and under-resourced, and it failed to ensure that Jamaica complied with its national and international obligations with respect to the rights of the child.\textsuperscript{58} It recommended that this office strengthen its efforts to ensure that Jamaica protect the rights of all children.\textsuperscript{59}
4. Right to privacy, marriage and family life

33. JSI stated that Sections 76, 77 and 79 of Jamaica’s 18th Century Offences Against the Person Act criminalized anal sex, private sex acts of consenting adult males, as well as any form of same-sex male intimacy termed ‘gross indecency.’ These provisions can be used to target and prosecute homosexuals. JSI recommended their repeal.61

34. JSI asserted that Section 80 of the Offences against Persons Act and Section 4 of the Town and Communities Act granted broad latitude for arrest and detention without a warrant of arrest or an order from a magistrate, and was also used to incarcerate gay men, lesbians and sex workers. It recommended that Jamaica repeal this provision and replace it with legislation which provided strict limitations on situations in which an arrest without a warrant is permissible.63

35. JSI asserted that Section 23 of the Sexual Offences Act criminalized adult consensual sex work, and recommended that Jamaica repeal this provision.65

36. JSI stated that the proposed Charter of Rights and Freedoms which will amend the Jamaican Constitution, made no reference to non-discrimination on the grounds of ‘sexual orientation’ and ‘gender identity.’ It recommended that Jamaica include “sexual orientation and gender identity,” “sex” and “HIV/AIDS status” in this proposed amendment.67

37. IACHR indicated that it strongly condemned the high level of homophobia that prevailed throughout Jamaican society. It has resulted in violent killings of persons thought to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual, as well as stabbings, mob attacks, arbitrary detention and police harassment. The resulting fear made it difficult for these people to access basic services. Also, defenders of the rights of gay, lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals have been murdered, beaten and threatened, and the police have been criticised in many instances for failing to prevent or respond to reports of such violence. IACHR stated that Jamaica must take measures to ensure that gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals can associate freely and exercise their rights without fear of attack. These measures could include adoption of public policy, campaigns against discrimination based on sexual orientation, and legislative reforms.68

38. JSI noted that there was no constitutional protection from employment discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. It also noted that sex work is criminalized, regardless of whether it is freely entered into by consenting adults.70

39. JSI stated that gay men, sex workers and young homosexuals are regularly evicted from their homes and left homeless.71

40. YCSRR stated that there was systematic exclusion of education services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex young people, who faced discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. It recommended that Jamaica: ensure equal access to education and equal treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex young people; and that education was directed to the development of each student and responded to the needs of students of all sexual orientation and gender identities.72

5. Freedom of religion or belief, expression, association and peaceful assembly and right to participate in public and political life

41. The Institute on Religion and Public Policy (IRPP) indicated that the Constitution provided for freedom of religion and that this right has been upheld. Local media continued to be an open forum for discussion of religious matters. It stated that the Rastafarian community claimed that they were unfairly targeted by law enforcement officials.
However, these claims have never been proved and the attention of law enforcement officials on the Rastafarian community seemed to be more related to the illegal use of marijuana in their religious practices.

6. Right to social security and to an adequate standard of living

42. IACHR stated that HIV infected persons were denied access to health care. JS1 expressed the view that gay men and sex workers are driven away from HIV/AIDS prevention treatment and care interventions because of discrimination and intolerance against them. JS1 recommended that Jamaica provide training on HIV/AIDS, sexuality and sexual orientation to all personnel in health care facilities and that the training should include the right to privacy and the protection of confidential information.

43. JS2 stated that non-public mental health facilities and organisations working for people with mental health did not receive Government funding. Integration of mentally-ill people into mainstream society is slow and painful. It recommended that Jamaica form working partnerships with NGOs to implement measures to improve the lives and mental health of patients; grant tax incentives to employers who hire mentally-challenged people; conduct public education programmes to sensitize the community about people with mental illness, as well as education programmes for the police; and set up rehabilitation centres for mentally ill people.

III. Achievements, best practices, challenges and constraints

N/A

IV. Key national priorities, initiatives and commitments

N/A

V. Capacity-building and technical assistance

N/A

Notes

1 The stakeholders listed below have contributed information for this summary; the full texts of all original submissions are available at: www.ohchr.org. (One asterisk denotes a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council).

Civil society

AI  Amnesty International*, London, UK;
GIEACPC  Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, London, UK;
IRPP  The Institute on Religion and Public Policy, Alexandria, USA;
JS1  Jamaica Aids Support for Life, Jamaica; Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-sexuals, and Gays, Jamaica; Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition, Jamaica; Sex Workers Association of Jamaica, Jamaica; Women for Women, Jamaica; The Underlined Response, Jamaica; International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex-Latin America and the Caribbean, Jamaica; Joint Submission;
JS2  Jamaicans for Justice, Jamaica; Women’s Resource and Outreach Centre, Jamaica; Amnesty International (Jamaica Chapter), London, UK; Peace Management Initiative, Jamaica; Mensana, Jamaica; Citizens’ Action for Free and Fair Elections, Jamaica; The Independent Jamaican Council for Human Rights,
Jamaica; Joint Submission;

YCSRR  Youth Coalition for Sexual Reproductive Rights, Ottawa, Canada.

Regional intergovernmental organization

IACHR  Inter-American Commission on Human Rights; Washington DC, USA

- IACHR Issues Preliminary Observations on Visit to Jamaica, Press Release No. 59/08 (IACHR Observations);
  - Case 12.468, Merits, Dudley Stokes, Jamaica, 14 March 2008;
  - Report No. 87/08, Petition, 558-05, Admissability, Jeremy Smith, Jamaica, 30 October 2008;
  - Report No. 61/06, Case 12.447, Publication, Derrick Tracey, Jamaica, 20 July 2006;

2 JS1, p. 3, para. 2; JS2, p. 2, para. 2.
3 JS1, p. 3, para. 3; JS2, p. 2, para. 3.
4 JS1, p. 3, para. 6; JS2, p. 3, para. 6.
5 JS1, p. 3, para. 5; JS2, p. 2, para. 5. See also submission from AI.
6 AI, p. 1.
7 JS2, p. 9, para. 57.
8 JS2, p. 9, para. 60.
9 JS1, p. 4, para. 8.
10 JS1, pp. 4–5, paras. 10–11.
11 JS1, p. 7, para. 18.
12 YCSRR, p. 5.
13 IACHR undertook an in loco visit to Jamaica to observe the human rights situation in this country, from 1 to 5 December 2008 (See IACHR Observations, p. 1).
14 IACHR Observations, p. 7.
15 JS2, p. 8, para. 51. See also submission from AI.
16 JS2, p. 8, para. 54.
17 IACHR Observations, p. 9.
18 YCSRR, p. 4.
19 AI, p. 1.
20 AI, Appendix 1.
21 IACHR Observations, p. 2.
22 IACHR Observations, pp. 1–2.
25 JS2, p. 4, para. 16.
26 IACHR Observations, p. 2.
27 JS1, pp. 4–5, para. 10.
28 JS1, p. 7, para. 16.
29 IACHR Observations, pp. 6–7.
31 IACHR Observations, pp. 7–8.
32 GIEACPC referred to The Child Care and Protection Act (2004) and The Offences against the Person Act and the Domestic Violence Act (1996).
33 GIEACPC, p. 2, para. 1.1.
34 GIEACPC, p. 2, para. 1.5.
35 GIEACPC, p. 2, para. 1.2.
36 GIEACPC, p. 2, para. 1.4.
37 GIEACPC, p. 2, para. 1.4.
38 IACHR Observations, p. 3.
39 IACHR Observations, p. 3. See also submission from AI.
40 IACHR Observations, p. 5. See also submission from AI.
JS2, pp. 4–5, paras. 17–20. See also submission from AI.

JS2, p. 5, para. 20.


IACHR Observations, p. 3.

IACHR Observations, p. 4.

IACHR Observations, p. 4.

IACHR Observations, p. 4.

JS2, p. 7, para. 34.

IACHR Observations, pp. 4–5.

IACHR Observations, p. 5.

JS2, p. 6, paras. 27–28.

JS2, p. 6, para. 32. See also submission from AI.

JS2, p. 6, para. 30.

JS2, p. 7, para. 33.

IACHR, p. 8; JS2, p. 7, paras. 40–43. See also submission from AI.

JS2, p. 8, paras. 48–49.

IACHR Observations, p. 8.

JS2, p. 8, para. 44.

JS2, p. 8, para. 50.

JS1, p. 4, para. 9.

JS1, p. 8, para. 19. See also submission from AI.

JS1, p. 4, para. 10.

JS1, p. 8, para. 20.

JS1, p. 4, para. 10 (iii).

JS1, p. 8, para. 21.

JS1, p. 4, para. 9.

JS1, p. 8, para. 22.

IACHR Observations, p. 8.

JS1, p. 6, para. 12.

JS1, p. 6, para. 12.

JS1, p. 7, para. 15.

YCSRR, pp. 4–5.

IRPP, para. 10.

IRPP, para. 7.

IACHR Observations, p. 9.

JS1, p. 6, para. 13.

JS1, p. 8, para. 24.

JS2, p. 10, para. 61.

JS2, p. 10, paras. 62–64.