

ADVISORY YOUTH COUNCIL OF THE BAHAMAS

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PRESS RELEASE: ON VIOLENCE AND CRIME IN THE BAHAMAS

The current crime scenario for the youth of our country, poses an urgent challenge with long-term implications for both the youth and our country as a whole. The increase in violence and crime in the Bahamas is irrefutable and threatens the very foundation of our way life and imposes both extreme social and economic costs. Unemployment and crime is universally perceived by a majority of young individuals in the Bahamas as a pressing challenge. Many of the governmental policies have proven ineffective and inefficient in their collective response to this challenge.

The Advisory Youth Council of The Bahamas offers our first draft of recommendations for the challenge of crime in our country. The primary concern of The Advisory Youth Council of The Bahamas is the issue of the public's confidence in the government's ability and capacity to protect its citizens and prevalence of justice. "If citizens of the Bahamas lack confidence in the police, the judiciary and other governmental authorities, no amount of repression will restore security. The success of any effective law enforcement system depends on the full willingness of the people in a country to participate and contribute in terms of finding a meaningful resolution to a problem. For our government to enjoy the trust and commitment of the people, it must strive and facilitate a continuum that eradicates exclusion, improves transparency and creates new opportunities, while fostering a system of accountability that encourages a sense of belonging for all its citizens. The Advisory Youth Council of the Bahamas has yet to conclude on a definitive decision on the usage of the death penalty in the Bahamas. The government's continuous inability to take leadership on the issue of crime has resulted in an abysmal failure on their behalf. Far too often the youth of our country's voices are completely neglected when decisions are being made about our future. Well it is the consensus of The Advisory Youth Council of the Bahamas that the days of old have come to an end. Henceforth we shall seek and hold accountable, with no exception or mercy, all elected representatives consciously failing to abide by their portfolio demarcations as per their office's Raison d'être - particularly failures to

consult with the youth of the Bahamas prior to decisions which directly or indirectly do or proposes to affect or effect the youth and any other failures in relation to youth therein.

To this end, The Advisory Youth Council of the Bahamas Offers the Following Recommendation:

Crime Recommendations

☐ The introduction of Juvenile Justice Reform system in an addition, the availability of counseling for young individuals in conflict with the law.

☐ The introduction of an efficient and effective response mechanism to the problem of domestic violence, particularly early or primary intervention programmes. The formation of new mechanisms for the participation of citizens in governance and for systems of direct accountability to citizens.

☐ The formation of Intelligence agencies to monitor the governmental process to ensure accountability.

☐ The formation of an aggressive and transparent response to corruption in government ministries.

☐ The need to strengthen advocacy for innovative policies aimed at citizen security.

☐ The introduction of a monitoring system to prevent child sexual abuse generally, but also among children in the care of government agencies. The formation of two-year monitoring of sex predators program, with mandatory enrolment for no less than 1 year and continuing as needed, depending on individual progress.

☐ The granting of legal weapons should be made more transparent, free of any corruption or bias. The granting of fire arms should be reviewed and scrutinized, to solely protect families and the public.

☐ The complete removal current legislation that tends to discriminate against indigenous persons and sexual minorities or facilitate intolerance and violence against these groups and the strengthening of government support in advocacy groups.

☐ The strengthening of additional support for victims affected by crime, inclusive of the training of law enforcement staff in dealing with various victim situations.

☐ The increasing of support should be especially supplied to families, especially families living in areas characterized by high levels of violence.

☐ The training of Social workers in order to offer specialized services for families withstanding criminal reports or the lack thereof.

☐ The increasing of the budget allocation for social and crime prevention programs.

☐ The promotion of pro-social behavior among young people, through structured voluntary community services.

☐ The creation of a youth diversion programme and non-custodial sentences for any wrongdoing, restorative justice, and alternative means for providing care and protection. Youth in conflict with law should be placed in community corrections and community service programmes while in the custody of their parents.

☒ A yearly evaluation of the mental and health conditions of young individuals who are currently in jail or prison and who are generally in the care of the government. The government should also provide the necessary medical treatments and counseling.

☒ The Judicial System should develop rational court scheduling strategies that focus on minimizing the continuous delays and backlogs and remove undue strain on criminal justice personnel/officers.

☒ The introduction of a credible Witness Management System.

☒ The complete review and removal of sentences that prove inconsistencies in punishments.

☒ The complete separation of juveniles and adults held prison or jail. Also the complete separation of juveniles detained for non-criminal reasons are housed from juveniles charged with or convicted of criminal acts.

☒ The investment in new technology to combat crime.

☒ The formation and strengthening of laws for parents who neglect the care of minors.

☒ The re-introduction and review of Urban Renewal in the communities.

☒ The re-introduction of law enforcement in schools.

☒ The government should allow an additional flexibility as it pertains to the Operation of the Royal Bahamas Police Force.

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