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Clarification of Amnesty International's position regarding the supply of arms and equipment to the Jamaica Constabulary Force

With regard to recent statements by the chairman of the Jamaican Police Federation linking Amnesty International to the alleged withholding by the British government of 500 guns and bullet-proof vests to the Jamaica Constabulary Force, the organization declared today that it has not taken any position regarding the supply of fire arms to the Jamaican police forces and has not requested the British authorities to withhold the guns on order.

In an interview with Jamaican radio station Hot 102, the chairman of the Jamaican Police Federation, Mr Michael James, strongly inferred that this was directly linked to allegations of human rights abuses made by Amnesty International and other human rights groups.

Amnesty International recognises the right of police officers to protect both themselves and members of the public from violence. However, the organization has grave concerns about the unjustified use of excessive or deadly force by police officers.

"All members of Jamaican society should work against crime in cooperation with the police," Amnesty International said.

"At the same time, all members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force must respect the human rights of the population they serve and undertake their duties in accordance with international standards governing the use of force by police officers."

Background

The use of force by law enforcement officials must be carried out in accordance with relevant international standards, including the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials. These state, *inter alia*, that law enforcement officials shall, as far as possible, apply non-violent means before resorting to the use of force and firearms. The use of force and firearms is considered an extreme measure, only to be resorted to in situations where it is strictly necessary and must be proportionate to the seriousness of the threat posed, with the aim of minimizing damage and injury and respecting and promoting human life and dignity.

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