



MINISTRY OF  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
& FOREIGN TRADE

# INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 2025

MESSAGE BY:

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE KAMINA JOHNSON SMITH, JP  
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade

Jamaica joins the international community in commemorating Human Rights Day 2025, which is being celebrated under the theme, “Our Everyday Essentials”. Indeed, human rights are fundamental to our daily lives and it is with this view that the Government of Jamaica has consistently placed priority on their promotion and protection in all spheres.

We continue to be proud that it was Jamaica, barely in its infancy as an independent nation, that began in 1963 to advocate and agitate for an International Year of Human Rights – a year eventually formally recognised in 1968. Since then, Jamaica has continued to be a strong and consistent voice on human rights at the national, regional and international levels.

Jamaica’s steadfast dedication to safeguarding the rights of all citizens has long served as an impetus for the nation’s alignment with key international human rights instruments. These include the two major international covenants on civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights, respectively, as well as conventions relating to the rights of children, women, persons with disabilities, migrant workers and the elimination of racial discrimination.

This year’s theme is particularly relevant as Jamaica grapples with the unprecedented and devastating impact of Hurricane Melissa. The loss of lives and livelihoods, displacement of persons, disruptions in supplies of food and water, as well as damage to ecosystems and critical infrastructure hamper the enjoyment of the most basic human rights for those affected.

Prior to this crisis, and even after the disruption of the covid pandemic, Jamaica had been making remarkable progress in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The country experienced a 50% reduction in homicide rates and record-low rates of unemployment at 3.3% and poverty at 8.2%. Positive steps were also undertaken to improve access to quality education and affordable healthcare. These results are a testament to Jamaica's long-term vision of creating a society that is inclusive, prosperous and resilient. Through strengthened institutions, expanded social protection initiatives, and the upholding of the rule of law, we continue to advance a Jamaica where no one is left behind in the attainment of everyday essentials.

As we diligently focus on rebuilding infrastructure and restoring the lives, hope and dignity of all Jamaicans, the Government of Jamaica will continue its advocacy for global climate action that takes into account the unique vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), including the human rights obligations of States in the context of climate change and the extra-territorial effects of those obligations.

As we commemorate Human Rights Day 2025, we reaffirm that safeguarding human rights is the responsibility of all Jamaicans. As we build a more resilient society, may we also work together to achieve greater enjoyment and promote even greater respect for human rights, so that present and future generations can live in dignity and realise their full potential.

**Happy International Human Rights Day!**