

“Jamaica Parliament approves extension of state of public emergency”

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KINGSTON – The Jamaica parliament has approved an extension of the State of Public Emergency in the St Catherine North area after it had been imposed on March 18 in a bid to curb criminal activities there.

All 49 of the 61 legislators who were present in the Parliament when the vote was taken on Tuesday, agreed to extend the State of Public Emergency to July 3.

Prime Minister Andrew Holness declared the State of Public Emergency for St Catherine North on March 18 initially for 14 days after 48 people were killed between January 1 and March 18.

Last year, 136 people were killed in St Catherine North.

Opposition Leader Dr Peter Phillips, said the measure should be employed sparingly.

“In circumstances like this, where it is a response not to natural disaster of some sort, it is really an indication of the failure of policy to deal with the situation of repeated criminal violence,” Phillips said.

Prime Minister Holness said he is hoping for a “more clinical approach that would set out powers, we could call it enhanced powers...that would allow us to rapidly deploy them, without having to go through the procedures that we have to now do.”

Holness said the government will soon articulate its crime plan publicly, but he said there is a major step to be taken.

“The crime plan must include in it, something to say this Parliament agrees on a set of actions that we are carving out national security as an area where there is bipartisan support for policy.”



