



Police Accountability in the Caribbean; Where are the People?

Jamaicans For Justice



Introduction

- **Brief overview of Caribbean Police Accountability Mechanisms**
- **Individual Country Overview**
- **Lessons Learnt**
- **Way Forward**

Overview

- “Police forces across the region characterised by high levels of corruption and severe weaknesses, or complete lack of, accountability mechanisms. The timidity and ineffectualness of reform efforts are failing to break corrupt linkages, entrench accountability or produce professionalism in police forces.”

Quick History

- **Countries were British Colonies.**
- **Shared history of slavery, indentureship, colonialism, multi-ethnic, migrant & mobile populations, economic struggle**
- **Parliamentary democracies -concentrate power in the hands of Prime Ministers**
- **Police Forces share core resemblance - colonial antecedents remain unreformed**

Policing in the Caribbean

■ Suffers ills of Lack of Reform:

- failure to follow due process;
- use of brutality and torture;
- corruption;
- bias and discrimination;
- extra judicial executions.

■ Why?

- “Poor policing...perpetuated and...fostered by the temptation of ruling regimes...to retain forces wholly in [their] control”

Table 1: Police Accountability Systems in the Caribbean

Country	POLICE SERVICE COMMISSION	INTERNAL POLICE INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION	OMBUDSMAN	CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT BODY
Antigua	Yes	No	No	No
Bahamas	Yes	Yes	No	No
Barbados	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Belize	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Grenada	Yes	No	No	No
Guyana	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Jamaica	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Yes
St. Kitts/Nevis	Yes	No	No	No
St. Lucia	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
St. Vincent & Gren.	Yes	No	No	No
Trinidad & Tobago	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Individual Country's Police Forces and Accountability Systems

- Antigua
- Bahamas
- BARBADOS
- Belize
- Grenada
- Guyana



Individual Country's Police Forces and Accountability Systems

- JAMAICA
- St. Kitts/Nevis
- St. Lucia
- St. Vincent & the Grenadines
- Trinidad & Tobago



Discussion

- No single blueprint for effective system of civilian oversight
- Mix of mechanisms within & outside parliament critical
- People must be de-marginalised from political process & from discourse on security forces



Caribbean Countries

- **Parliamentary Democracies**
 - **Vigorous Public Debate**
 - **Some Civilian Oversight**
- YET STILL**
- **Struggle With Police Reform and Modernization**
 - **Unable to Ensure Police Accountability**
 - **Unable to Achieve Less Abusive Policing.**

**Table 2. DFID/ODA Expenditure and commitments
1991/2 – 1997/98 (£'000) for policing projects**

Country	Actual Exp.	Future Commitment	Future Commitment
Anguilla	475	580	105
Belize	555	565	10
Grenada	308	350	42
Jamaica	1,674	6,435	4,761
St Kitts-Nevis	1,023	1,137	114
St. Lucia	69	270	201
St. Vincent & Gr.	801	887	86
Other Caribbean	252	255	3



Why Few Benefits?

- **Police Cannot Control Crime on Their Own**
- **Depend on Public Support**
- **More Successful Crime Control Will Follow From Obtaining Public Support**
- **Law and Order Are Not in Conflict.**
- **Policing Reform Led, or Carried Out, by Regimes Mired in Paradigms of Top Down, Hierarchical Structures Which Concentrate Power in Hands of State**
- **Jamaica's Case**



The Way Forward

- Need “scaffolding to support a new framework”.
- Number of mechanisms not important
- Design of mechanisms critical
- Accountability to People



Conclusion

- Reform Police Services Commissions
- Change Constitutional Power Arrangements
- Devolved, Decentralized Power
- Accountable, Democratic Police Services will follow