

The Media Association Jamaica Limited (MAJ) notes the recent arrest of three employees of the Nation Publishing Company Ltd in Barbados in relation to the publication of a photograph of two minors engaged in sexual activity in a school classroom. The MAJ is concerned with these developments particularly during a period when Jamaica and the rest of the region are celebrating the abolishment, in at least one CARICOM territory, of criminal defamation which has served, though seldom used, as a shackle on press freedom.

It is the legitimate job of media to provide information to the public, to shed light on wrongs of all forms, to critique and to criticize, all with a view to strengthening democracy, good governance and accountability. It is our view that The Nation Publishing was doing no more and no less than carrying out its legitimate function with the publication of the picture in question.

While the publication may have been offensive to some, we note that all due precautions were taken to ensure that the identities of these minors were not revealed. We call upon the authorities to direct their indignation to the right sources such as the failure of the education system, and the systems of socialization to instill appropriate behavior. Shooting the messenger will not cause the message to go away.

The MAJ is extremely concerned that the successful use of the Legislation in this case would set a dangerous precedent and could have a chilling effect on freedom of expression.