

The Media Association Jamaica Limited notes with serious concern the fire-bombing of the car of a guest on a CVM Television programme on Wednesday morning and the threats against several citizens who are openly expressing their opinions on current issues in the society. There is concern that fire-bombing of the car could be related to the guest's appearance on a programme where he expressed his views.

In addition, from all that we have heard the threats on the lives of other persons from Jamaicans for Justice, are related to their representatives expressing their opinions on public issues.

The Association wishes to make it clear that our democracy is placed at tremendous danger if our people cannot speak freely, clearly and critically without the fear of reprisal. The freedom of expression is one of the fundamental rights we have enjoyed as a nation and we must do everything to guard it.

We therefore call on policymakers, opinion-leaders and generally on law abiding citizens and civic organisations, to condemn all strikes against free speech and freedom expression.

The Association also notes that in the past few days there have been some suggestions and insinuations that a vibrant press, seeking answers to issues of public interest was being blamed by some persons for misleading the public. The MAJ encourages continued care and responsibility among media workers as they carry out their duties but more importantly, the Association asks that the media are not made a “scapegoats” and media workers are not “targeted” simply because they seek answers to questions of public interest.

The MAJ further notes that, in his address to the nation on Monday May 17, 2010, Prime Minister Bruce Golding, who is also the Minister of Information, highlighted “good governance” objectives still to be addressed by his administration. They included “Reform of the Libel Laws to enable greater transparency and accountability in government”. However, we notice that later in the speech, the reform of libel laws was dropped from the Prime Minister's list of items to be fast tracked.

The MAJ urges the Prime Minister and Minister of Information not to forget or neglect the issue

of reforming our libel laws. Considerable work has been done on this and it should not be stalled or left unfinished. “We in media agree with the Prime Minister when he said that such reforms will assist in enabling greater transparency and accountability in government. There are all the indications that the time to embrace and fast-track activities to support this is now”, the MAJ statement said.