



Ministerial Statement

By

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Minister of National Security

Recent Youth Violence in Our Community

March 21st, 2025

Mr. Speaker, there are videos circulating in Bermuda showing students from our schools, particularly Cedarbridge, and including middle school students, engaging in violent and disturbing conduct towards each other. This Government is not taking this lightly.

Mr. Speaker, I contacted the CedarBridge Academy Chairperson, Senator Lindsay Simmons, who was already in communication with Principal Kenneth Caesar, Minister of Education, Senator Crystal Caesar, MP Leroy Bean, and the Bermuda Police Service. Immediate action is being taken to address this situation and prevent further incidents.

Mr. Speaker, we also witnessed an act of bravery and responsible citizenship on Wednesday afternoon from Deputy Principal Christopher Swan, who risked his life to tackle a young man armed with a knife. His quick response likely prevented serious harm, and we commend him for his courage and dedication to protecting others. However, this should never have happened in the first place. No student, teacher, or staff member should have to face this level of violence in a school environment or around Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, this antisocial behavior among our youth is deeply concerning. We cannot afford to lose any more of our children to violence, crime, and negative influences. Every life lost, every young person caught

up in the justice system, and every act of youth violence is a failure of society. This is not just a school issue—it is a community matter, and we must all work together to remedy this problem.

Mr. Speaker, this Government remains committed to curbing antisocial behavior and ensuring the safety of our youth. We recognize that this is not just a disciplinary issue but a deeper societal issue that requires a unified, multi-faceted approach throughout our country.

Mr. Speaker, we are also asking the public to stop forwarding videos of violent incidents involving our youth. Sharing these videos only amplifies the trauma, fuels negativity, and encourages further antisocial behavior. Instead, if someone receives such content, we urge them to report it immediately to the Bermuda Police Service so that the proper authorities can handle the matter. Our focus should be on protecting our children, not spreading outrageous content that could further harm them.

Mr. Speaker, we must all recognize that we are the village. We are the role models that our children need to see. They are watching us, learning from our actions, and looking to us for guidance. If we want them to make positive choices, we must show them what that looks like.

Mr. Speaker, we must also demand that the parents of these children take responsibility for their behaviour. These children are clearly recognizable in these videos, so it is right for us to expect that the adults in their lives take accountability for this unacceptable and egregious behaviour. Adults must play their role in training up our children and not tolerate this violent behaviour. Government cannot solve this problem without the proper intervention of parents and adults.

Mr. Speaker, our Violence Reduction Strategy is a comprehensive action plan that contains a multitude of proactive and preventative measures to address violence in our community. Our Gang Violence Reduction Team

is heavily involved in delivering programmes and providing interventions that are helping to address this issue of youth violence.

Mr Speaker, as part of the Violence Reduction Strategy that was shared with this Honourable House last November, here are some of the programmes that we know are the solutions for the way forward:

1. Stronger Security and Prevention Measures

- a. We shall continue the collaboration between the Bermuda Police Service and schools to ensure proactive measures are in place to detect and deter dangerous activities.
- b. Enforcing a zero-tolerance policy for weapons in schools, with clear, decisive consequences.

2. Mental Health and Crisis Intervention

- a. Expanding access to counselors to support young people before they reach a crisis point.
- b. Identifying at-risk youth early and providing intervention programs that address trauma, behavioral issues, and emotional distress.
- c. Strengthening partnerships with mental health organizations to ensure youth have access to the help they need.

3. Parental and Community Engagement.

Through the Violence Reduction Strategy, we are:

- a. Launching education opportunities and awareness programs to equip parents with the tools to recognize warning signs of gang involvement, bullying, and emotional struggles in their children.
- b. Strengthening connections between schools, churches, community leaders, sports clubs, and local organizations to provide mentorship and guidance.
- c. Encouraging parents to take an active role in their children's lives—monitoring their activities, setting boundaries, and fostering open communication.

4. Empowering Youth with Positive Alternatives

- a. Expanding community programs and job-training programs to give young people constructive outlets for their energy and creativity.
- b. Partnering with businesses and professionals to create mentorship programs that expose youth to career opportunities and positive role models.
- c. Increasing funding for youth-focused initiatives that promote leadership, discipline, and self-respect.

5. Conflict Resolution and Restorative Justice

- a. Continuing peer mediation programs and conflict resolution training to help our youth learn how to handle disputes peacefully.
- b. Continuing a restorative justice approach where youth are held accountable for their actions but are also given the opportunity to reform and grow.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda must work together in this arena. The future of our children is at stake, and we cannot allow violence, peer pressure, and negative influences to steal their potential.

Mr. Speaker, I have for some time now been advocating for a collective approach to the youth violence in our country. We are asking the entire community to look out for our children. If you see something, say something. If you know a young person who is struggling or heading down the wrong path, reach out and provide some guidance, advice or help. If you can be a mentor, a supporter, or a protector, now is the time to step up and make a positive difference in someone's life.

Mr. Speaker, it takes all of us—parents, teachers, neighbors, faith leaders, law enforcement, and the wider community—to ensure that our children grow up in a safe, supportive and nurturing environment. This is not just about laws and policies; it is about our collective responsibility to protect and guide the next generation. We must hold each other accountable for

the contributions we are making towards a safer and more secure future for our children.

Mr. Speaker, this Government stands firm in its commitment to doing our in protecting our children. We will continue working with educators, parents, law enforcement, and the community to create a safer and brighter future for Bermuda's youth.

Mr. Speaker, I hasten to reiterate that this is not a political matter. This matter is far beyond the cut and thrust of politics. This is a matter that demands our collective cooperation and mutual support, irrespective of political affiliations. Our youth deserve our collective efforts towards providing them with the guidance, discipline, structure and support they need to become productive and responsible citizens in this country.

Thank you, **Mr Speaker.**