



Minister with responsibility for Information in the Office of the Prime Minister, Senator the Hon. Sandra Falconer has hailed Jamaica's number one standing in Press freedom in the Western Hemisphere as "a significant recognition of Jamaica's democratic tradition and our sacred regard for Press freedom".

The Minister was reacting on Wednesday, January 30, to the just-published global report on Press freedom by the highly regarded Parish-based **Reporters Without Borders**, which showed that Jamaica has overtaken Canada as the country which boasts the highest level of Press freedom in the Western Hemisphere.

Jamaica is ranked 13th in the 179-country ranking, ahead of the United States (32), Britain (29), Canada (20) Germany(17) and Switzerland (14).

Minister Falconer said that legislation, such as the Access to Information Act, and the Broadcasting Commission and Radio Re-diffusion Act, as well as Government policy to open up and diversify the media landscape, has considerably strengthened the foundations of Press freedom in Jamaica.

She reiterated the commitment of the Government to table in Parliament, before the end of this legislative year, a Bill which will eliminate criminal libel and increase freedom of speech.

The Minister said the Government is "resolutely committed" to the preservation and advancement of Press freedom in Jamaica, as it sees Press freedom as inextricably linked to democracy.

"This Government will do nothing to impede the work of journalists in the exercise of their duties on behalf of the people and acting as watchdogs of our democracy," she pledged.

She pointed to the restructuring of what was the Cabinet Press briefing to what is now the Jamaica House Press briefing, where journalists have wider access to public officials as well as Government Ministers.

Senator Falconer added that there have been regularly scheduled meetings with Government communicators across all ministries, departments and agencies, “with my clear instruction that journalists must be given access to information and must be facilitated in their work of informing the Jamaican people.”

She said the robustness of the Jamaican press is one of the things which the entire country could be proud of, in a world where many people do not enjoy these rights. She noted that Jamaica’s ranking in the latest **Reporters Without Borders** survey is an improvement on the 2012 **Freedom of the Press** report by Freedom House, where Jamaica was ranked 22.