

The MAJ is pleased that the long awaited amendments to the defamation laws were tabled in the senate last week. Our congratulations go out to the minister and all involved in bringing the process to this point. The proposed abolition of criminal libel will, if passed, be a significant achievement for Jamaica and is applauded by us.

We note however that the debate was postponed until this Friday, July 12, 2013 and also note that the justice minister has made verbal mention of further adjustments to what was tabled for which we seek a better understanding before commenting more fulsomely on the contents.

It is the MAJ's position that none of the changes proposed thus far give media greater ability, or power, to ferret out corruption and/or to hold our public officials to higher standards of accountability. The changes merely facilitate a more practical and efficient application of the laws in modern times.

Lastly, the MAJ believes that the best regulation for press freedom is self regulation. The proposed revised laws, added to existing broadcasting regulations and the existence of individual media codes of conduct and ethics provide a mix of legal, regulatory and self-regulatory oversight of the media which is crucial for an independent media and for a healthy democracy.