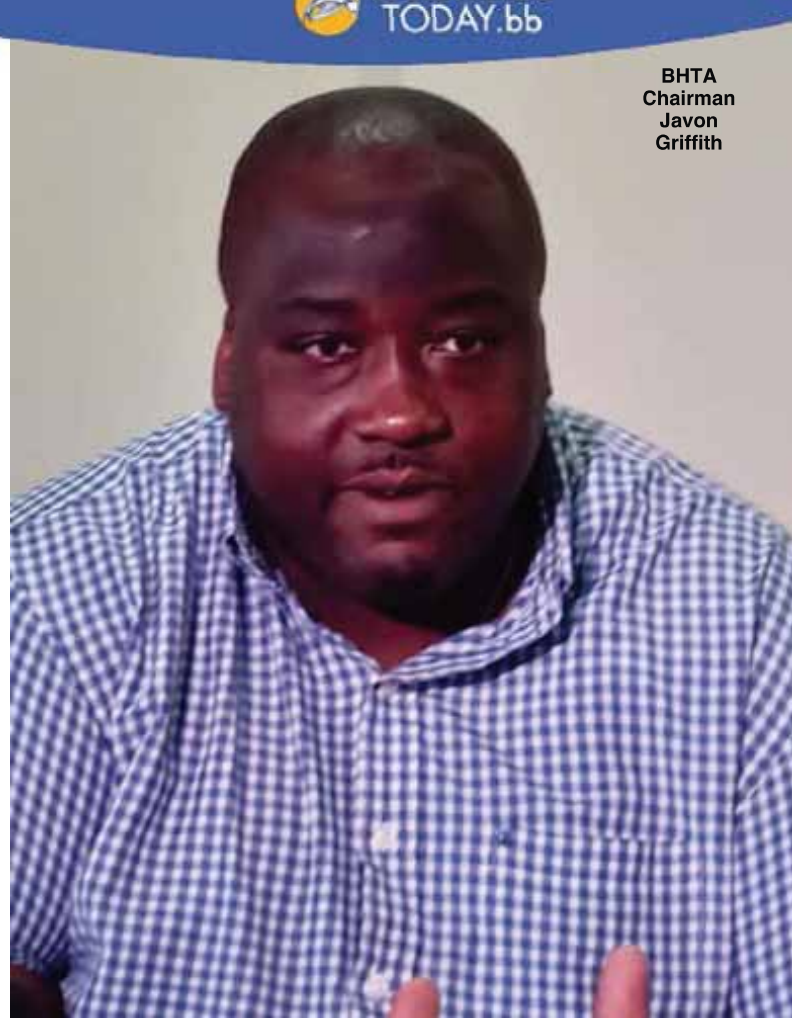


**CEO & Managing  
Director of Goddard  
Enterprises Ltd  
Anthony Ali**



**BHTA  
Chairman  
Javon  
Griffith**



# THREAT ASSESSMENT

## CRIME SURGE A THREAT TO TOURISM, BIZ LEADERS WARN

By Ryan Gilkes

Business leaders have sounded the alarm over a recent surge in violent crime, warning that it poses a significant threat to the island's vital tourism industry and the global reputation it relies on.

The Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA) and the Barbados Private Sector Association (BPSA) have called for urgent action to address the escalating crime rates, which they say could have devastating consequences for the economy if left unchecked.

Javon Griffith, chairman of the BHTA, expressed grave concern about the recent spike in violent incidents, particularly over the past three weeks.

"The last three weeks have been nothing short of shocking for all of us in the industry. And it's something we hope can be brought to an end very quickly," Griffith said at a press conference hosted by the BPSA.

He warned that the situation could prompt travel advisories from key source markets, potentially derailing **Crop Over**.

"This is something we are very actively aware of, something which we hope doesn't come to pass, especially over the next two weeks in the lead-up to the main events of our **Crop Over Festival**," he said.

Griffith emphasised the critical importance of safety to Barbados' tourism brand: "First and foremost, we are a destination that has safety listed as one of its brand planks. So as soon as people no longer feel safe in the destination, that becomes an immediate threat to the tourism industry."

He outlined the potential far-reaching impacts of a tarnished

reputation.

"Tourism is the lifeblood of our economy, providing employment to thousands and contributing significantly to our GDP. Any prolonged perception of Barbados as an unsafe destination could lead to a decline in tourist arrivals, impacting businesses ranging from hotels and restaurants to tour operators and local artisans," he explained.

"The tourism dollar circulates throughout our economy, supporting not only those directly employed in the sector but also countless other businesses and services. When tourism suffers, the ripple effects are felt across the entire country."

Calling for a comprehensive strategy to combat crime, the tourism chief said: "We need a comprehensive strategy that includes enhancing security measures, improving community engagement, and addressing the root causes of crime. This isn't just about protecting our tourism industry; it's about safeguarding our nation's future."

Griffith stressed the need to maintain Barbados' positive image abroad: "Our marketing efforts have always focused on highlighting Barbados as a beautiful, welcoming, and safe destination. We cannot afford to let recent events overshadow the hard work that has gone into building this reputation. It's imperative that we address these issues head-on and reassure potential visitors that Barbados remains a safe place to visit."

He suggested collaboration between government and private sector on crime prevention: "This is a national issue that requires a national response. We need to work together to implement effective solutions, whether that's through increased funding for law enforcement, community outreach programmes, or partnerships with international agencies to combat gun trafficking and other criminal activities."

The BHTA chairman also highlighted the role of communities in tackling crime: "Our communities are the first line of defence against crime. By fostering a sense of pride and ownership in our neighbourhoods, encouraging residents to look out for one another, and providing support and opportunities for at-risk youth, we can create a safer

environment for everyone."

Anthony Ali, a BPSA independent director, managing director and chief executive of Goddard Enterprises Ltd., echoed these concerns, warning of potential long-term damage to Barbados' reputation.

Drawing parallels with a past crime wave in Saint Lucia, Ali cautioned: "The implications of that usually lag, or the manifestation of that lags much, much longer than the actual occurrence."

He noted that the deterioration in safety had been gradual but was now becoming more visible. "We're talking about crime here in Barbados escalating in the last few months. Over the last few years, by the way, it's gotten a little bit worse, a little bit worse, and I think we're seeing the impact today," he said.

Ali shared a worrying anecdote about the impact on business decisions: "We were looking to bring an employee here to Barbados, and they then went back and said, having considered everything, we'd probably like to stay where we are because we're not quite sure where the crime is going."

Despite these challenges, he praised the island's long-standing reputation for safety: "Barbados' reputation for years and years has been one of the safest places to ever go." But, he warned: "With what's going on today, I think we're tarnishing that reputation, and it will have a longer-term impact than just what we're seeing in a couple of weeks."

Ali emphasised the need for a coordinated response to the crisis: "This is not a simple solution. It does require a holistic approach by agencies, NGOs, the government, the social partnership, and the private sector as well. Everybody needs to understand that they have a role to play, and they all need to step up and get involved in that."

He called for a unified strategy: "We just need to figure out what that strategy is on a higher level so that we can all row in the same direction rather than running off and trying to solve a problem but really not making any progress." (RG)