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# The New Dawn

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**Public Service Announcement**

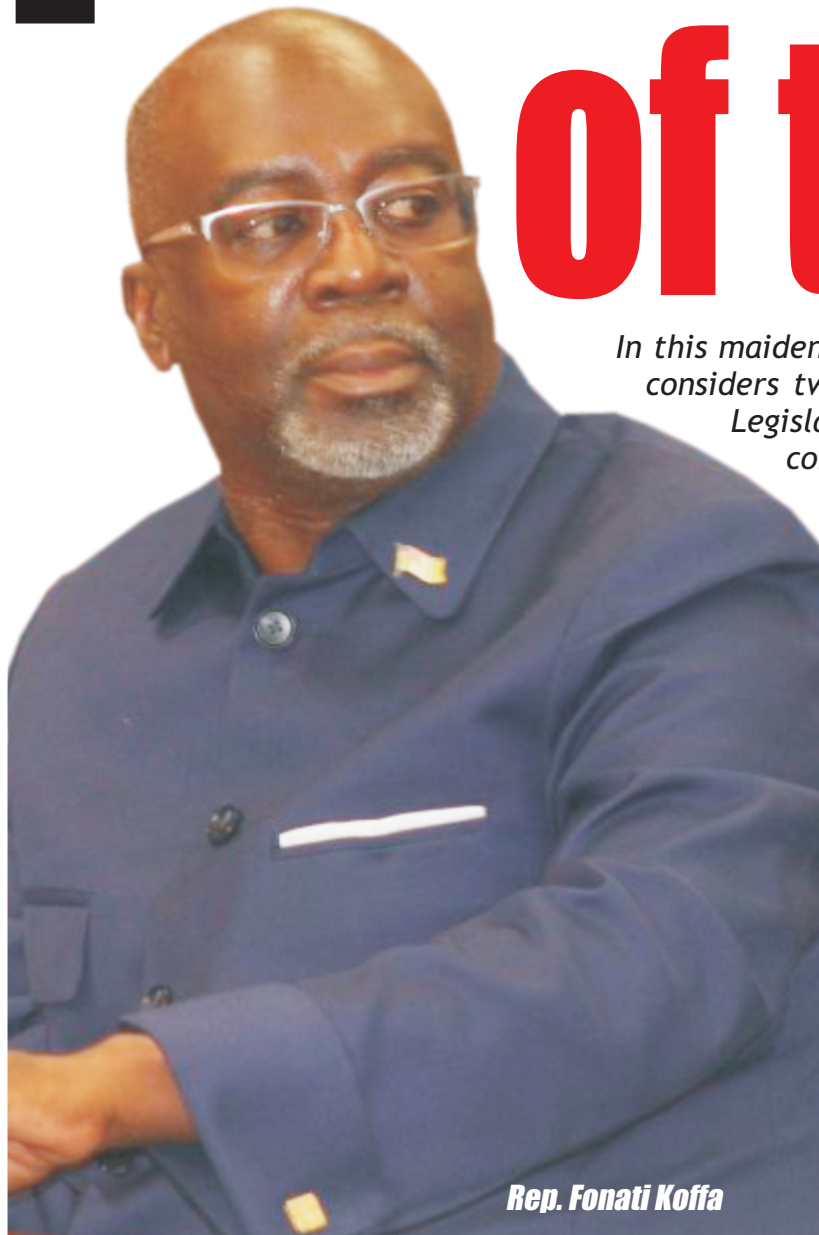
THIS IS TO INFORM THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND ALL OUR CLIENTS & READERS THAT THE BUSINESS AND NEWSPAPER OFFICES OF THE NEW DAWN NEWSPAPER HAVE BEEN RELOCATED ON UN DRIVE OPPOSITE THE NATIONAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION (NIC), BEHIND PUBLIC WORKS MINISTRY.

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# New Dawn's personalities of the year



Rep. Fonati Koffa

*In this maiden edition of the New Dawn's personalities of the year, the paper considers two major categories. These categories look at the work of the Legislators and consider the most outstanding performer based on contributions not only within the National Legislature but also outside of the Capitol Building.*

*The paper also considers the various political parties and how effective they have been since the end of the 2017 general presidential and legislative elections. The paper considers the impact that the parties have made in terms of making though controversial but serious discourse to the entire body politics of Liberia regardless which side the chips fall.*

*It is against this background that the paper has selects Rep. Fonati Koffa as lawmaker of the year for his outstanding contribution in both the house and community. The paper also selects Mr. Mulbah Morlu as Party Chairman of the year. Reasons to wit:*

**SEE PAGE 6 & 7 FOR FULL TEXT**



CDC Chairman Mulbah Morlu



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# Continental News

## US sends more troops to Kenya

A contingent of American crisis response soldiers is currently stationed at Manda Bay to beef up security after the military base was attacked by al-Shabaab fighters on Sunday.

The East Africa Response Force (EARF) was deployed to secure the base which has both Kenyan and American military presence. "The EARF provides a critical combat-ready, rapid deployment force. The EARF's ability to respond to events spanning a vast area of responsibility provides a proven and invaluable on-call reinforcement capability in times of need," said US Africa Command (Africom) Director of Operations Major-General William Gayler in a statement on Tuesday.

EARF responds to a broad range of military operations, including the protection of US citizens and diplomatic facilities, support for non-



Photo- US Army at Camp Simba, Manda Bay, Kenya

combatant evacuation operations, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief operations and other missions as directed. It also responds to crises and also has troops that are always on call.

Most EARF members are stationed at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, or travel throughout East Africa to conduct training

engagements.

Manda Bay base, also known as Camp Simba, is a Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) military base which is used by US forces to provide training and counter-terrorism support to its East African partners, respond to crises, and protect US interests. Deployment of the personnel comes as Africom revealed that

terrorists who were repulsed in the attack penetrated through a perimeter to launch their assault.

The Nation had reported that the unknown number of Shabaab fighters gained entry to the airstrip through Chandavai in Hindi where they disconnected power before launching their attack. KDF and Africom personnel

repelled the attack involving indirect and small arms fire.

Africom later confirmed that it lost three service members in the pre-dawn attack that also saw five terrorists dead.

KDF later reported that following a military operation, one PKM gun, four RPG launchers, four AK-47 rifles, a hand grenade and assorted ammunition were recovered.

Al-Shabaab staged the daring attack barely a week after the US launched air strikes targeting the extremist group after a car bomb killed at least 81 people in Somalia. Four militants were killed in the strikes.

Their attack on the military base in Lamu also happened just four days after militants from the terror group killed three people and injured three others who were travelling along the Mombasa-Lamu road.

They ambushed a convoy of buses, including Simba Coach, Mombasa Raha and TSS, that were headed to Lamu from Mombasa. AFP

## Kenyans and Nigerians 'have great faith in Trump'

Kenya and Nigeria are among countries where people have great faith in US President Donald Trump, according to a new poll by the Pew Research Center.

The poll, the aim of which was to find out what the world thinks about Mr Trump, stated that 65% of Kenyans surveyed had faith in the US leader, with the rating dipping slightly to 58% among

Nigerians polled.

This is despite Mr Trump's past missteps - including reportedly calling African states "shit-hole countries".

The two African countries were among 33 others polled outside the US between May and October 2019. Pew also notes that sub-Saharan African nations have typically expressed favourable opinions of the US.

Kenya and Nigeria are both

among the top recipients of US economic aid, according to the Washington-based Security Assistance Monitor.

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari was the first sub-Saharan African leader invited to the White House in 2018.

The Trump administration also sold 12 US military aircraft to Nigeria in a reversal of an Obama-era policy. BBC

## Uganda police arrest opposition politician

Ugandan police on Wednesday arrested pop star turned opposition leader Bobi Wine after preventing him from holding a meeting with his supporters.

Wine, whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi, and two other opposition members of parliament were driven away by

Wine was prevented from holding his first public meeting with supporters, where he wanted to discuss his plans to challenge longtime President Yoweri Museveni in the 2021 presidential elections.

At that meeting police fired tear gas to disperse a crowd of supporters outside the capital,



Ugandan singer-turned-politician Robert Kyagulanyi aka Bobi Wine

police Wednesday from Lira, in northern Uganda, where they had attempted to hold a public meeting,

said David Lewis Rubongoya, the executive secretary of Wine's group, People Power. "He is being driven in a police van at breakneck speed to an unknown destination. We don't know whether he is being driven back to Kampala," he said. On Monday

Kampala.

The foiled meeting had been authorized by electoral authorities.

The 37-year-old opposition lawmaker who wants to run against long-serving President Yoweri Museveni in 2021 elections, is planning to hold several consultative meetings with his supporters across the country. AFP



President Trump sparked a row over his alleged use of the word "shit-hole" to describe African nations

# EDITORIAL

## Hoping for a better economy

**THE LIBERIAN ECONOMY** under the two years old Weah administration continues to experience downward trend characterized by hyperinflation, rising prices, falling revenue, cash shortage, lack of jobs and salary delay, among others. The unpleasant situation has inflicted excruciating psychological and economic pains on ordinary citizens.

**LIBERIANS ENDED 2019** with an acute shortage of cash in the banks, leaving depositors queuing at various commercial banks for money frustrated.

**THIS COUNTRY CANNOT** afford to continue on this route with persistent retrogression. The government should rise to the challenge by introducing policies to revise the economy and restore confidence.

**THIS 2020 PROVIDES** a blank check for the government, ordinary Liberians and foreign partners to rescue the economy. Yes, this situation requires all hands on deck.

**HOWEVER, GOVERNMENT IS** the main custodian of the economy and how it conducts the state of affairs would largely determine which way the economy heads. Needless to speak about the current downward trend with three-digit exchange rate, which clearly indicates how we are proceeding as a nation.

**THE WEAH ADMINISTRATION** should calm the current political and public dissent in the country to restore investor' confidence which would generate economic stability and growth.

**THE ECONOMY STREET** on a very bad note in the new year characterized by street protest and violence, creating panic and uncertainty. It is regrettable and unfortunate that we started this way.

**GROWING DISENCHANTMENT AMONG** ordinary Liberians over the dismal performance of the economy is not only self-inflicting but undermining economic prospects.

**THIS SHOULD BE** reversed and the government must take the lead by initiating dialogue void of politics. In other words, we need to be brutally frank when discussing the issues that confront us as a country. President Weah should listen to critics, as his government and tolerate their views rather than branding those opposing his style of governance as enemies of the state.

**THIS COUNTRY RISKS** going down the drain again like it happened during the civil war in the 1990s unless our leaders treat governance as a serious matter. The people have right to call their government to account whenever their wellbeing and happiness is threatened, as it is in the current instance. The President should exercise leadership by lifting the economy from its present state to give Liberians hope in this New Year.

**New Dawn**  
FULLY INDEPENDENT

# COMMENTARY

By Jeffrey D. Sachs

## America's Dangerous Iran Obsession

*The US, seemingly with no awareness of its recent history with Iran, and led by an emotionally unbalanced president who believes he may commit murder and get away with it, is still acting out a 40-year-old psychological trauma. As usual, it's others who are most at risk.*

**N**EW YORK - US President Donald Trump's order to assassinate Iran's General Qassem Suleimani while on an official mission to Iraq was widely hailed in Trump's jingoistic Republican Party. Government-sanctioned murders of foreign officials, clerics, and journalists are commonplace nowadays. Yet there is something special about America's bloodlust against Iran. It is a 40-year-old obsession that has now brought the United States and Iran to the brink of war.

The US fixation on Iran dates back to the Islamic Revolution in 1979, when Iranian students took over the US embassy in Tehran and held 52 Americans hostage for more than a year. That traumatic experience has made it psychologically impossible for American politicians to calibrate US policies. It is the reason, for example, that Trump has now threatened the war crime of destroying 52 targets in Iran, including cultural sites, one for each of the 1979 hostages, if Iran retaliates for Suleimani's murder.

Trump is claiming the right to murder a leader in a foreign country and to commit war crimes if that country retaliates. Yet this criminality is widely applauded in the US. It reflects a kind of post-traumatic stress disorder of the US political system, at least on the right. It is similar to America's reckless launch of wars across the Middle East after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The fact that Trump is psychologically disordered adds to the fury. Recall that he famously boasted that he could shoot somebody on Fifth Avenue "and not lose any votes." With his order to murder Suleimani, he is evidently determined to put that proposition to the test.

What most of the American public and much of the American political elite fail to comprehend is that the US has committed far more crimes against Iran than vice versa. The US has willfully and recklessly created an enemy for no reason other than its own misguided actions.

Consider the key milestones since the early 1950s.

First, the US and the United Kingdom overthrew Iran's government in 1953, after the democratically elected prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, moved to regain control of Iran's oil, which had been captured by the British empire. The US then replaced the democracy it had overthrown with the authoritarian regime of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, who was propped up by the SAVAK, his brutal intelligence agency and secret police, during the quarter-century from 1953 to 1978. The Iranian students seized the US embassy in Tehran after the deposed Shah was admitted to the US for medical treatment.

The following year, the US armed and encouraged Saddam Hussein's Iraq to invade Iran, triggering a nearly decade-long war that killed around 500,000 Iranians. As of 2014, some 75,000 Iranians were still being treated for injuries from the chemical attacks Saddam used.

The US also hit civilian targets. In 1988, the US military shot down Iran Air 655 - easily identifiable as an Airbus A300 if the US had been taking suitable precautions - killing all 290 people on board. And in 1995, the Iranian public became subject to tough US economic sanctions that have never been removed, only tightened over time.

This continued even after 9/11. Iran supported the US-led invasion of Afghanistan to depose the Taliban, and also supported the new US-backed president, Hamid Karzai. Yet in January 2002, US President George W. Bush called Iran part of an "Axis of Evil," along with Saddam's Iraq and North Korea.

Likewise, rather than press all Middle East countries, including Israel (with an estimated 80 nuclear warheads), to abide by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and support efforts to establish a nuclear-free region, the US exclusively pressured Iran.

Then, in 2015, the US, under President Barack Obama, the UK, France, China, Russia, and Germany, negotiated a deal with Iran under which Iran agreed to end its nuclear reprocessing in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions by the US and others. The United Nations Security Council unanimously backed the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Yet, according to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, the JCPOA was an act of appeasement. Trump unilaterally repudiated the deal in 2018, the only signatory to do so, and then dramatically tightened US sanctions.

The purpose of stricter sanctions is to crush the Iranian economy in an attempt to destabilize the regime. Iran is now in a US-induced depression, with GDP down 14% between 2017 and 2019 and inflation in 2019 at 36% (both according to recent IMF estimates), and severe shortages of medicines and other vital goods. Meanwhile, despite repudiating the JCPOA, the US has continued to insist that Iran abide by its terms.

The US, seemingly with no awareness of this history, and led by an emotionally unbalanced president who believes he may commit murder in broad daylight and get away with it, is still acting out a 40-year-old psychological trauma.

At this moment, the world should remember the wise and enduring words of a very different type of US president. In June 1963, just months before himself falling victim to an assassin, John F. Kennedy addressed the Irish Parliament:

"[A]cross the gulfs and barriers that now divide us, we must remember that there are no permanent enemies. Hostility today is a fact, but it is not a ruling law. The supreme reality of our time is our indivisibility as children of God and our common vulnerability on this planet."

There is no reason why Iran and the US could not be at peace. By building on the 2015 nuclear agreement and their many common interests, a new relationship is yet possible. But with Iran's retaliation already underway, it is especially urgent now that the European Union not follow the reckless Trump administration into a spiral of escalation that could result in war.

## O-PED

By Ishac Diwan

**Lebanon's Perfect Storm**

*After years of maintaining a dysfunctional political economy based on sectarianism and rentierism, Lebanon's ruling elites are being confronted with simultaneous financial, economic, and political crises. The question now is how they respond to a reformist movement demanding fundamental change, including a new political settlement.*

**B**EIRUT - In retrospect, financial crises usually appear predetermined; but rarely do they offer much clarity about history's direction. That is certainly the case in Lebanon today, where a predictable crisis has thrown the country into a state of deep uncertainty.

Since Lebanon's long civil war (1975-1990) ended, its economy and political system have been propped up by external borrowing, leading inevitably to unsustainable levels of public debt. At some point, capital inflows had to stop, and that moment came in late 2019, following a series of negative shocks.

This "sudden stop" has left the country with a triple crisis of dramatic magnitude. The first problem is the balance of payments. Lebanon's current-account deficit stands at a whopping 25% of GDP, and its export base is too small even to pay for essential imports. The second problem is fiscal. Lebanon's public debt now totals more than 150% of GDP. Government revenues are collapsing under the weight of the recession, and the budget deficit - already large, at 10% of GDP in 2019 - is widening rapidly.

On top of it all, Lebanon is also experiencing a banking-sector crisis. The major banks, the main recipients of capital inflows from abroad, have invested heavily in Lebanese sovereign debt (which accounts for 50% of their portfolios, on average), and are now essentially insolvent.

Together, these crises have plunged the economy into an abyss. Firms, starving for loans and imports, have started to lay off workers or shut down entirely. The recession has the makings of a Lebanese Great Depression.

The primary source of capital for Lebanon's rentier political economy was not oil, as elsewhere in the region, but rather investment from the diaspora, which was attracted by high interest rates and a fixed exchange rate pegged to the dollar. Not surprisingly, there are signs of "Dutch disease" everywhere: deposits have grown to above 400% of GDP, creating a wealth effect that has lowered the national saving rate to an improbable -3% of GDP. Inequality is high and rising. And a real (inflation-adjusted) exchange-rate appreciation of about 50% between 2000-2015, has weakened the tradable sectors. In the absence of goods and services to export, Lebanon has been hemorrhaging educated young people.

But, more centrally, massive capital inflows allowed a sectarian elite to entrench itself through patronage, rather than performance. These elites have milked both the public and private sectors to create a bloated ruling coterie of cronies. While this arrangement has ensured some political stability in an otherwise chaotic region, it has failed to meet basic needs. Even electricity provision is inconsistent and unreliable, while the broader challenges facing the macroeconomy have gone completely unaddressed.

The financial crisis has triggered a political uprising. A popular revolutionary movement has taken to the streets to reject sectarianism and demand an end to corruption. Nonetheless, the regime's responses to Lebanon's economic problems have so far overwhelmingly favored the elites, suggesting that the crisis could end up being "resolved" on the backs of the poor and the middle class, and in a way that further consolidates sectarian politics.

For example, the state has refused to introduce capital controls, leaving it to each bank - whose major shareholders include ruling politicians - to decide how to ration cash withdrawals. In practice, this has allowed elites to shift their capital abroad while average citizens struggle to access their deposits.

Moreover, the central bank has reduced interest rates on deposits, but not yet on public debt, thereby boosting banks' profits. It has also continued to service its foreign debt, which is mostly owed to domestic banks, despite its falling international reserves. And there are signs that it could start to sell state-owned assets to elite-connected entities at fire-sale prices.

The formal exchange rate, meanwhile, has been left untouched, allowing elites to access cheap dollars while average citizens confront the realities of a rapidly falling free-market rate, which is now at a 40% discount. This devaluation will accelerate when the state starts printing liras to cover civil-service wages. In fact, the central bank is already using lira to pay interest on dollar deposits (which account for over 80% of all deposits), thus setting the stage to inflate away the public debt. With the costs of debt reduction being pushed onto depositors through "liralization" of their holdings, the banks' equity could be largely spared.

If this scenario materializes, Lebanon's middle class will be decimated by lower real wages and pensions and a liquidation of its savings. The emigration of skilled youth would accelerate, and even the financial interests of the diaspora - upon which the system relies - would be harmed. If the sectarian system were to survive under these conditions, it would govern an impoverished population that could be controlled by ever-cheaper patronage. Lebanon would find itself in a situation similar to that of Venezuela.

The new republic being promoted by the revolutionaries, by contrast, would take a radically different approach. The revolutionaries want to improve Lebanon, not

## OPINION

By Ian Buruma

**America's Sacred Politics**

It is unsettling to hear people at the top of the US government speak about politics in terms that rightly belong in church. They are challenging the founding principles of the American Republic, and they might actually win as a result.

**N**EW YORK - Charles Carroll of Carrollton, Maryland was the only Roman Catholic to sign the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Although one of the Founding Fathers, as a Catholic Carroll was not allowed to hold public office. This changed only in 1788, when the Constitution prevented Congress from establishing any religion, and religious affiliation ceased to be a test for those seeking public office.

Not everyone was happy about this separation of church and state. Thomas Jefferson was attacked by some as a dangerous infidel, and zealots believed that religion would die in America if he were elected president. To this day, there are many people who would like to put religion back into the center of public and political life. This is presumably what US Attorney General William Barr, a deeply conservative Catholic, meant when he denounced "secularists" for launching an "assault on religion and traditional values."

Prejudice against Catholics as enemies of liberty and potential traitors (because of their spiritual allegiance to Rome) also died hard. In 1821, John Adams wondered whether "a free government [can] possibly exist with a Catholic religion." Anglo-American freedom and democracy was traditionally associated with rugged Protestant individualism; Catholics were believed to be reactionary slaves to an ecclesiastical hierarchy. Individualistic Protestants were free-thinking, industrious, and devoted to making the best of themselves (materially, as much as spiritually), whereas Catholics were backward and not infrequently lazy.

The idea that Catholics were not fit for capitalism was promoted at the beginning of the last century by the famous German sociologist Max Weber (a Protestant). John F. Kennedy, thus far the only Catholic US President, had to state clearly during his campaign that his loyalty was to the Constitution, not the Vatican. Anti-Catholic biases also played a part in English hostility to European unification, which was sometimes seen as a Popish plot to restore the Holy Roman Empire.

The strident views of a US Attorney General are not the only sign that times have changed significantly. Only one Supreme Court justice is a Protestant (Neil Gorsuch), and even he was raised Catholic. Three justices are Jewish. The other five are Catholics (some with ties to Opus Dei, a secretive organization that began to flourish in fascist Spain in the 1930s).

The other historic change, which began in the latter half of the twentieth century, is evangelical Christians' political alignment with conservative Catholics. For a long time, American Protestants were happy to live with a constitution that shielded their religious lives from state intervention. Spiritually neutral governments could be ceded the public sphere, as long as they left religious believers alone. This changed after the Civil Rights movements in the 1960s, which alarmed many white Christians, especially in the southern states. Today, evangelicals, like Catholic conservatives, are among President Donald Trump's most ardent supporters. They, too, believe that family and faith are under siege from liberals and secularists.

To both groups, the fact that Trump is not known to be religious, and that his life has been anything but a model of traditional Christian morality, is irrelevant. Such figures as Energy Secretary Rick Perry believe that Trump is "God's chosen one." Secretary of State Mike Pompeo suggested not long ago that Trump had been "raised" to save Israel. "As a Christian," he said, "I certainly believe that is possible."

To call this hypocrisy is to miss the point. Reverence of this kind does not demand that a leader be morally irreproachable. Even a sinner can be an instrument of God.

Not wishing to be accused of bias, people are sometimes reluctant to point out the religious background of public figures in America. Yet it is important to understand the history of certain types of belief in order to comprehend an extraordinary era in which a sinful president is surrounded by believers who are convinced that God put him in the White House to save Israel and redeem a wickedly secular America.

Obviously, not all Catholics are reactionary. Pope Francis is not, which is why Catholics like Steve Bannon, an early ideological influence on Trump, dislike him deeply. Liberation theology, popular in South America in the 1960s and 1970s, was a movement of the radical left. And US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, one of Trump's main political opponents, is as much a Catholic as Barr.

But there is a strain of Catholicism, rooted in Europe, that never reconciled with the French Revolution, which broke the temporal power of the Church and overthrew the divine right of kings on which absolute monarchy rested. One of the most articulate and influential reactionary thinkers, Joseph de Maistre, believed that without the sacred authority of monarchy and church, society would descend into immoral chaos.

This line of anti-Enlightenment thinking never faded away. In France, it fueled right-wing nationalist movements, such as the anti-liberal, anti-Semitic, and anti-secular Action Française. But Catholic conservatives were not the only Christians to oppose the secularist legacy of the French Revolution. Until they merged with other denominations into a Christian Democratic Party, the main Calvinist party in the Netherlands was called the Anti-Revolutionary Party.

The attempt by contemporary Catholic conservatives and evangelicals to infuse politics with their religious beliefs obviously runs counter to the ideas of the French Revolution, which sought to uphold freedom from religion, but also of the American Revolution, which instituted freedom of religion. Both groups are targeting the carefully erected barriers between church and state.

This is dangerous, not only because it fosters intolerance, but also because it challenges, in the spirit of de Maistre, the idea that political argument should be based on human reason. Once political conflicts become clashes of faith, compromise becomes impossible. A believer cannot bargain over a sacred principle. For those who see Trump as an instrument of God, it doesn't matter how rational his opponents' accusations of malfeasance are. They must defend him. To call this unreasonable is to misunderstand their defense. You cannot argue with God.

It is possible that Trump's reverential base won't be sufficient to keep him in the White House past 2020. But such ardent faith is hard to oppose with rational plans to fix this or that problem. That is why it is so unsettling to hear people at the top of the US government speak about politics in terms that rightly belong in church. They are challenging the founding principles of the American Republic, and they might actually win as a result.

# OPINION

By Peter Quaqua

## Punch FM Verdict is a Rude Reminder

Back in 2003/04, one of the areas the Partnership for Media and Conflict Prevention in West Africa proffered for reform in Liberia was the broadcast sector. The group, which comprised mainly of media rights organizations including UNESCO, the IFJ, Article 19 and Journalists for Human Rights, called for the establishment of an Independent Broadcast Regulator. Their recommendations were made at the end of an assessment mission to Liberia in the aftermath of the civil conflict. As a consequence, the Independent Broadcast Regulator was one of three bills submitted to the Legislature in 2008 for enactment. The other two were the Freedom of Information Act and the bill to transform the state radio into a Public Service Broadcaster. Only the FOI was passed.

The powers to regulate the broadcast sector are currently divided between The Liberia Telecommunications Authority (LTA) and the Ministry of Information, which has proven to be conflicted and manipulative. Under the Telecommunications Act of 2007, the LTA is the agency of government responsible to assign and manage radio and television frequencies, in addition to GSM and ISP providers. Its mandates are concerned mainly with technical issues linked with the use of spectrum. Parameters such as ownership, excessive concentration of licenses, transfer of licenses to third parties, seem to be left to chance.

Essentially, under the dual regulation mechanism, the critical criteria regarding broadcast content are left for the Ministry of Information to handle. With this regime, the heavily-loaded PRC Decree No. 46, creating the Ministry of Information, gives it the discretionary powers to determine who is permitted to get a license from the LTA. Under such arrangements, there are no guarantees that critical voices will ever see day light.

So I submit to us that our country needs an independent broadcast regulator. This is compelling because if we had an independent sector regulator, the government of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf would not have been directly involved in the closure in 2011 of Power FM/TV; Kings FM/Clar TV and Love FM/TV. The Government claimed then that the stations were broadcasting hate messages as the CDC protested the elections result. At least one person shot and killed at the Party's headquarters by state security. The overnight closure of the media outlets went before the Criminal Court 'A' at the Temple of Justice in Monrovia. Judge James Zota (now deceased), ordered the stations reopened after some kind of hearing and told them to "go and sin no more," without going into the evidence provided by State lawyers. Bad lesson!

I am convinced that if the country had an independent regulator, the government of Sirleaf would not have also been involved in the closure of Voice FM in 2016; Of course if we had an independent regulator, the government of President George Weah would have avoided the temptation of forcefully closing Root FM in 2019 and confiscating the entire studio equipment. You see, if our country had a competent broadcast regulator, Mr. Weah's government again would have easily excused itself from the denial of PUNCH FM operational license. Yes, if we had an independent regulator, the government would not have been in court with PUNCH FM and Roots FM - the regulator would be seized of the matters. I really mean government lawyers would not be in courts defending or prosecuting any radio/TV outlets.

Well, in the absence of a proper regulator, the ruling on January 7, 2020, by Judge Peter Gbeneweleh of Civil Law Court in Monrovia, against government for holding back the operating license of Punch FM is beyond a wakeup call. This is simply a rude reminder that we need to rethink our strategies in countering "unfavorable propaganda and other distortions" as contemplated by Decree 46 that the Ministry of Information derives its powers from.

I must commend the parent company of Punch FM, One Media Incorporated, for choosing to challenge the government's action in court. The Court granted the Petition for Declaratory Judgment and ordered the license be restored despite the resistance by state lawyers. "Don't we normally say small shame is better than big shame?" It might be smart to just let it be instead of going to the Supreme Court. But if authorities are convinced the highest court will overturn the ruling of the court below, then they should go because precedent is being set here.

British philosopher Bertrand Russell would say: "Government can easily exist without laws, but law cannot exist without government." I may not have the exact philosophical interpretation of this quotation but it keeps coming back to me. My small sense is Russell is suggesting to us that we all need to act within the laws - both the governed and the governors.

Meanwhile, how could the Ministry of Information deny the operational license to Punch FM after reportedly paying US\$2,900 annual license regulation fees to the Liberia Telecommunications Authority? Government may be acting tough as usual by taking exception to the judge's ruling, but this is shameful to say the least.

In fact, this situation is ample reason why the Government should encourage the reopening of discussions around the bill to establish the Independent Broadcast Regulator. It is very much in the interest of the government to stay clear of these technical and professional decisions. We need a competent authority of technicians who will act in line with internationally accepted standards and not one based on political instinct.

As a media rights campaigner, I am aware of the reckless disregard and abuse of broadcast standards by some of our colleagues. But government is not the right venue to deal with those issues because such decisions will almost, always be tempered with politics. We need a truly independent regulator with clearly defined competences, proper powers and legal framework aimed at regulating the whole sector; one with clear criteria with regards to content regulation, licensing, media concentration, and powers to sanction evenhandedly and timely.

I submit to you that because our country was able to achieve the abolition of criminal defamation laws through the combined efforts of media, CSO, legal, government and international actors, this too is possible for the greater good and image of our country. Closely linked with the establishment of the Independent Broadcaster Regulator is the need for government to also relinquish the state owned Liberia Broadcasting System by turning it into a Public Service Broadcaster. I think the time is right to do these reforms.

To this end, it might also be a politically astute for the government to allow for a comprehensive reform of the powers of the Ministry of information. We need a national conversation on the overall communication policy of the government. To be honest, over the last fifteen years or so, the Ministry of Information has been the source and instigator of some of the tension in the air. I can appreciate that our friends at the Ministry have been trying to aggressively enforce the mandate of the Ministry, but in the age of the internet as well as the explosion media outlets in the country, it is near impossible for government to continue business as usual and win any kind of propaganda against its citizens.

So my friends, isn't the ruling in the Punch FM case sufficient reason to rethink? Do we need any other reminder? Let's stop being prisoners of our past and do some things differently, with due respect.

*Peter Quaqua is the current head of the West African Journalists Association, former president of the Press Union of Liberia, and a media rights campaigner. Contact: pqua31@yahoo.com/0886529611*

# Double Land Sales Fueling Dispute in Margibi

**M**argibi- The Glazon community along the Kakata Highway established 2014 has been faced with the illegal sale of land that has led to dispute among buyers.

Mr. Robert Gust, Co-Chairman of the community said since the establishment of the community, there have been disputes.

He said in the land dispute, those who are strong fighters are always victorious, while the weak find another option.

Madam Cecelia Yeagar, a local resident of the Glazon community said she had been affected by this "unlawful" act, noting, the land on which she now resides was sold to her by the wrong person, and the rightful owner is now asking her to rebuy the property or vacate the land.

She expressed frustration saying, she has no idea as to where and how she might get additional money to save her home.

Meanwhile, another community resident, Mr. Simeon Flomo indicated that an alley with a shop and house attached alongside a well is denying him quick access to the main road.

"The cases have dropped to at least 3 to four per week", Mr. Toby said. He further explained that in solving the dispute, the parties involved are summoned along with the land dealer.

The first determining factor of the real owner is the one with prominent deed who also is paying taxes to the government. In this case, he said the one with the non-permanent deed is asked to relocate or demand a refund of his money.

However, if such intervention fails due to the severity of the matter, Officer Toby intimated that the case is then transferred to Bensonville Magisterial Court or any nearby high court that is clothed with the authority to handle such case.

In 2018 The Liberia Land Authority (LLA) named Montserrado, Margibi, Nimba, Bong, and Grand Bassa counties as the "red zones" of land conflicts in the country. This assertion comes against the current backdrop of a spate of land-related conflicts which appear to be on the increase.

The LLA said Liberia is overwhelmed with land cases, indicating that the rural communities are also



He mentioned that they have tried to speak with the owner, but he is not willing to listen, adding, the land dealer from which he bought the half lot confirmed that there exists no alley to where he is situated. But Mr. Flomo and other inhabitants attested that the alley is clearly shown on their deeds.

Madam Duborma King, one of the land administrators in the area said, the land is large and her family members are many, most of whom she said, sell the land illegally.

Madam King urged that those wanting to buy land in the area should do thorough research of the rightful owners of the land, as well as do a proper background investigation before buying land.

Mr. Emmanuel Toby, Officer-In-Charge of the Liberia National Police said, Mount Barclay Police detachment of the Township of Johnsonville which is closer to the land dispute area is the first point of the intervention of reports of illegal sale of land.

Officer Toby narrated that land disputes have been rampant over the past time but reported that it was now reducing due to their intervention.

experiencing the problem, especially those involving boundary disputes between clans.

According to the LLA, Margibi is seriously overwhelmed with land cases, including Duazohn community. It's considered as the corridor of land problems in Liberia. Marshall and Todee have many land cases ranging from double sales to fake ownership. Bong, Nimba, and Montserrado continue to have more cases.

The LLA introduced the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) layout procedures are geared toward resolving conflicts

ADR includes dispute resolution processes and techniques that serve to bring disagreeing parties together, short of litigation. It is a collective term for the ways that parties can settle disputes, with the help of a third party. This involves handling land cases outside of the court, which is less expensive and works for contending parties.

This story is written by She Writes, She Leads as part of its Mentorship Program.

# New Dawn's personalities of the year

**I**n this maiden edition of the New Dawns personalities of the year, the paper considers two major categories. These categories look at the work of the Legislators and consider the most outstanding performer based on contributions not only within the National Legislature but also outside of the Capitol Building.

The paper also considers the various political parties and how effective they have been since the end of the 2017 general presidential and legislative elections. The paper considers the impact that the parties have made in terms of making though controversial but serious discourse to the entire body politics of Liberia regardless which side the chips fall.

It is against this background that the paper has selects Rep. Fonati Koffa as lawmaker of the year for his outstanding contribution in both the house and community. The paper also selects Mr. Mulbah Morlu as Party Chairman of the year. Reasons to wit

**Rep. Cllr. J. Fonati Koffa** is a member of the 54th Legislature of the Republic of Liberia. He hails from Sasstown, Grand Kru County.

**Position:** He is the chair of the House Judiciary Committee and is a ranking member of the Committee on Elections & Inauguration as well as the Committee on Human & Civil Rights. He represents the people of District 2, Grand Kru County.

Upon his ascension to the Legislature, Cllr. Koffa, immediately declared his intention to contest for the speakership of the House of Representative, but soon back down due to a political arraignment between the Coalition for Democratic Change and opposition political parties. Rep. Koffa willingly relinquished his speakership's quest and settled to head one of the powerful committees in the House of Representative -House Judiciary Committee, where he enjoys the full support of the current

leadership.

As head of the House Judiciary Committee, Cllr. Koffa has been its intellectual source not only that but to the Executive Branch of Government since his entry to Capitol Building.

**Government**

Prior to his election as representative he served as Minister of State without Portfolio and Legal Advisor to former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf from 2014 to 2016. During that period, he was also tasked by former President Sirleaf as Special Prosecutor and Chairman of a Special Task Force Investigating and prosecuting official corruption across all levels of government.

**Politics**

He began his entry into politics as a founding member of the Liberty Party, the third leading opposition party in Liberia where he was eventually elected as Chairman from 2011 to 2014. During his time as Chairman he oversaw the growth and

expansion of the party including the increase of seats the party held in the National Legislature. He resigned the Liberty Party in 2018 and joined the Coalition for Democratic Change where he serves as a member of the Executive Council.

**Legal Career**

Hon. Koffa began his legal career in the United States in 1998 in private practice and then moved to Liberia in 2009 and became a founder and Managing Partner of the International Law Group (ILG), now one of the emerging corporate and government law firms in Liberia. He was admitted to the Supreme Court Bar of Liberia as valedictorian of its Class of 2014.

**Education**

Hon. Cllr. Koffa is a graduate of the University of North Carolina School Of Law at Chapel Hill, where he obtained a Juris Doctorate (JD) degree in Law. His educational pursuit took him to Raleigh, North Carolina State University, where he obtained a Master of Public Administration (MPA) and a Bachelor of Public Administration (Cum Laude)



Publishing Company, Copyright 2010

**Memberships:** American Bar Association, National Bar Association, Liberian National Bar Association

**Interests:** Golf, Politics, History

**Family:** Hon. Cllr. J. Fonati Koffa is married to Mrs. Dama

the establishment of War Crimes Court here.

Despite being national chairman of the ruling establishment, Morlu has openly criticized CDC's administration that brought serious internal tensions among partisans, stalwarts and standard bearer of the party,



with concentration in Urban Planning, from Shaw University, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA.

**Awards & Honors:** Best Oralist Moot Court, University of North Carolina School of Law, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, United Negro College Fund Meritorious Leadership Award, Shaw University Distinguished Leadership Award, Valedictorian, Supreme Court Bar, Class of 2014.

**Publication:** Land of My Father. A Pictorial Anthology of Grand Kru County, Liberia. Published by Burd Book

Yekeson Koffa and the union is blessed with three (3) children.

Mulbah K. Morlu, Jr. is a Liberian politician & Civil Rights activist and is the National Chairman of Liberia's ruling party with Ambassador George Weah as President of Liberia.

Morlu as strong critic of bad governance, was incarcerated 14 times during the administration of former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf for speaking against ills of society, corruption, bad governance and for calling for

President Weah.

Due to the realities of criticism, President Weah reconsidered his decision by pledging his unflinching support to work with Morlu's leadership for the betterment of the party and the country at large.



# New Dawn's personalities of the year

**Mulbah K. Morlu, Jr.** is the national chairman of the current ruling Coalition for Democratic Change, the grand coalition comprises of former National Patriotic Party of former President Charles Taylor, the Liberian People Democratic Party of former house Speaker Alex Tyler and Congress for Democratic Change of President George Manneh Weah.

Mr. Morlu started his political journey with the Congress for Democratic Change in 2004 in Accra, Ghana where he was recruited by then soccer star, now President Weah.

Morlu move to Monrovia following the end of the wars, and headed the Progressive Action for Change as chairman, a covert group, which recruited young people and discharged some operative of the Congress for Democratic. Morlu worked along with Representatives Acarous Gray and Thomas Fallah. The Progressive Action for Change trained the first ever militant group of the CDC and party's stalwarts.

In 2005/06, Morlu was elected by congress of the CDC as chairman for mobilization and recruitment, the position he used to recruit thousands of people that today are strong supporters and executive of the CDC.

2009, Morlu was elected by congress as vice chairman for operations, his works led the

CDC to the second run off during the 2011 Presidential elections that saw former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf elected for the second term.

Morlu served in the capacity for operations, and campaign within the border points of Liberia that led to the first presidential victory of the CDC.

Following the election, many stalwarts of the party managed their way into government, but as founding member of the CDC, Morlu decided to stay with the party to help President Weah in the governance process of the Coalition for Democratic Change and the government at large.

Since his ascendancy to the chairmanship of the ruling establishment, Morlu had fought to stabilize the party and partisans from the three political parties, he had control the high expectation of the partisans about chasing government's employment and he had developed strategies in helping the governance system to meet the expectation of the Liberian populace.

According to documentation and information gathered from the headquarters of the CDC in Congo Town, the Morlu's administration has lobbied employment of over 20,000 partisans, his administration had purchased party's land in the 15 counties for the sole purpose of local headquarters



structures and he had lobbied for 28 foreign scholarships for deserving partisans who are doing their respective studies in Japan, China, and the United States and 60 domestic

scholarships for partisans here.

The headquarters of the CDC hosting the construction of a vocational technical training center for partisans with free of charge facilitates and the Morlu's administration had constructed 19 shops and given loans to marketers selling at the headquarters of the CDC with no interest expected from the loan scheme.

The headquarters of the CDC being modernized under the watchful eyes of chairman Morlu, he had constructed a mini Sycamore Tree Stadium, brand store for marketing of party's products including caps, T-shirts, and other party's related items. He party now owns its radio and television stations, highlighting development of the party and government, seriously putting the interest of the country first in its broadcast.

Morlu had taken the CDC to six by elections and the CDC won three of the six election namely; the CDC won for the first time ever in the history Senatorial by election that brought Cllr. Augustine Chie of Sinoe County to the Capitol Building, the CDC also won Montserrado County Senatorial by election bringing on board Senator Saah Joseph, and Montserrado County Electoral District \$15, bringing to the

front Abu Kamara as representative for that district.

Morlu promised that impending 2020 Special Senatorial election, his leadership will reclaim Montserrado County by defeating Abraham Darius Dillon and he had promised to win at least nine of the 15 counties seat comes October of this year.

Morlu, born in Zorzor District, Lofa County unto the union of Mr. and Mrs. Morlu and he later moved to Monrovia to acquire formal education. He started his political life with the National Patriotic party as Montserrado County District #10, now electoral district #11 as youth league chairman.

His dream is how transform the political lamplight for the better for all. Being victim of war and having many struggles ranging from stepfather died in Belleh Yalleh Prison for his failure to pay hut tax, his twin brother was killed by forces of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia in 1991, and his mother died from tuberculosis 1992, during the wars. He narrated with terrible experiences; his dream is strengthen the political space.

By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor



# Français

## L'ANC traite le pouvoir actuel de régime tyrannique

L'ANC (Alternative National Congress) a condamné l'usage par la police anti-émeute du gaz lacrymogène et des canons à eau pour disperser les manifestants lundi dernier.

Des milliers de manifestants descendus dans la rue suite à l'appel du Conseil des patriotes ont été dispersés à coup de matraques, de canons à eau et de gaz lacrymogènes après qu'ils ont décidé de faire du feu afin de se faire à manger devant le siège du parlement libérien.

Ils s'étaient réunis comme prévu en dépit des appels des ambassadeurs des États-Unis, de l'Union européenne, de la CEDEAO et du coordonnateur des résidences de l'ONU qui voulaient qu'ils manifestassent le dimanche 4 janvier.

La manifestation a été relativement paisible du matin jusqu'à tard le soir. Mais tout a dégénéré lorsque les manifestants ont fait du feu entre le palais présidentiel et le siège du parlement, connu sous l'appellation : « The Capital Building ».

« Un acte de tyrannie »,

c'est en ces termes que l'opposition a qualifié l'action des forces de l'ordre et de sécurité. "Il s'agit d'un acte de tyrannie et d'une action digne d'un tyran qui veut terroriser son peuple, qui veut lui infliger de la souffrance et des blessures et le mettre à mort", a déclaré l'ANC dans un communiqué de presse publié lundi soir.

La manifestation qui se voulait pacifique s'est donc terminée dans le chaos à

cause de l'intervention musclée des forces de l'ordre.

« Nous condamnons fermement l'acte de violence commis aujourd'hui par le gouvernement du Libéria contre des citoyens pacifiques qui ont pris part à la manifestation organisée par le Conseil des Patriotes. Ce gouvernement, après avoir promis les citoyens d'assurer sa sécurité tout au long de la

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9



## Une manifestation pacifique devient chaotique

Une manifestation pacifique a dégénéré en violence le lundi 6 juin, après que les forces de l'ordre ont fait usage du gaz lacrymogène pour disperser de force les manifestants.

Les forces de l'ordre tentaient d'empêcher les manifestants de cuisiner, de manger et de dormir sur les

lieux, devant la présidence de la république.

Le Conseil des patriotes (COP), qui avait organisé une manifestation de masse similaire le 7 juin 2019 pour exiger des réformes au sein du gouvernement du président George Manneh Weah, a appelé à manifester le 6 janvier 2020.

La COP exige le limogeage

d'un certain nombre de responsables gouvernementaux et la publication des avoirs du président Weah et des résultats de l'audit de la gestion des 25 millions de dollars libériens injectés dans l'économie pour, dit-on, éponger l'excès de liquidités.

Après des semaines de menaces de la part d'un groupe pro-gouvernemental d'organiser une contre-manifestation le même jour, les partenaires internationaux sont intervenus, ce qui a sauvé le pays d'un chaos possible. Le COP avait été prié de suspendre sa marche du 30 décembre, date initialement prévue.

Mais lundi, tard dans la soirée, les forces de l'ordre ont fait usage du gaz lacrymogène et des canons à eau pour disperser les manifestants qui tentaient de faire la cuisine sur les lieux de la manifestation. Le chef du COP, Henry P. Costa, a déclaré aux journalistes que « ... notre peuple était pacifique jusqu'à ce qu'il soit provoqué et gazé, et plusieurs d'entre eux sont blessés, nous dit-on ».

Il a démenti l'allégation de



## Côte d'Ivoire : Laurent Gbagbo et Pascal Affi N'Guessan se sont rencontrés à Bruxelles

L'ex-président ivoirien et son ancien Premier ministre se sont retrouvés pour la première fois depuis neuf ans en face à face à Bruxelles, vendredi et samedi dernier. Des entretiens pour le moment auréolés de discrétion.

Le Front populaire ivoirien, parti fondé par Laurent Gbagbo est scindé en deux depuis 2014. D'un côté la frange reconnue par la justice ivoirienne et dirigée par Affi N'Guessan. Et de l'autre une frange restée fidèle à Gbagbo et surnommée FPI-GOR pour « Gbagbo ou rien ». À dix mois de la présidentielle, et alors que Laurent Gbagbo, en résidence surveillée, attend toujours une décision de la CPI quant à un éventuel procès en appel, cette rencontre n'est pas anodine.

De cette rencontre, on ne sait pas grand-chose si ce n'est que l'ex-président ivoirien Laurent Gbagbo et son ancien Premier ministre Pascal Affi N'Guessan se sont vus deux fois. À chaque fois le secrétaire général du FPI-GOR, Assoa Adou était présent. Mais aucun des deux FPI ne souhaite communiquer davantage sur le contenu des discussions. Aucune photo n'a été diffusée.

Trouver un candidat

Ces rencontres ont d'ailleurs été gardées secrètes au sein même des deux partis, de nombreux cadres ayant été mis au courant après coup. Et si on ne sait pas ce qui s'y est dit, on connaît l'intérêt de chacune des parties à discuter avec l'autre, après sept ans de

brouille. À dix mois de la présidentielle le FPI doit arrêter une stratégie, proposer un candidat. Et à cet égard, une réunification semble indispensable. « Comment réconcilier les Ivoiriens quand ils ne sont pas capables de se réconcilier entre eux ? », entend-on régulièrement à Abidjan à propos du FPI qui a fait, précisément de la « réconciliation » son cheval de bataille politique.

Selon le communiqué laconique du FPI Affi N'Guessan, ces rencontres se sont faites à la demande de ce dernier. L'ancien Premier ministre avait déjà tenté de voir l'ex-président au mois de mars. La tentative avait capoté. Et de retour à Abidjan, Pascal Affi N'Guessan avait eu des propos peu amènes à l'égard de Laurent Gbagbo, lui déniait la présidence du parti. Il avait d'ailleurs annoncé sa candidature à la présidentielle, si Gbagbo n'était pas en mesure d'y aller.

Depuis l'eau a coulé sous les ponts, certains lieutenants d'Affi l'ont quitté et les mots se sont adoucis. Et si la double rencontre de ce weekend semble un tout premier pas, il semble que les violons ne soient pas encore accordés. En témoigne cette communication à minima, unilatérale (le FPI-GOR n'a pas communiqué) sur une rencontre en catimini. On est loin d'une réconciliation en grande pompe pour le moment.

la police selon laquelle des armes à feu auraient été découvertes dans deux véhicules appartenant apparemment au représentant Yekeh Kolubah, membre du COP et féroce critique du président Weah et son régime.

"Nous voulons affirmer catégoriquement qu'à aucun moment, l'honorable Yekeh Kolubah n'a mis des armes dans aucun de ces deux véhicules", a fait valoir Costa.

Plus tôt lors de la manifestation de lundi, le sénateur du comté de Montserrado et membre de la COP, M. Abraham Darius Dillon, a déclaré que le président Weah n'a aucune idée du leadership et qu'il n'est pas un bon leader.

Lors d'une interview sur les lieux de la manifestation, Dillon a exprimé sa frustration face au fait que le président

Weah soit traité, selon lui, comme un dieu par les députés et les sénateurs, au point que personne n'ose l'interroger.

Selon M. Dillon, les manifestants ont montré aux yeux du monde qu'ils ne sont pas des gens violents. "Nous sommes ordonnés, nous sommes pacifiques, nous chantons des chansons régulières, nous dansons en cours de route...", a-t-il dit.

M. Dillon a également fait valoir que la manifestation a montré au gouvernement et au reste du monde qu'une grande partie du peuple libérien se sent lésé.

Il a rejeté du revers de la main les propos de M. Rufus Neufville, ancien membre du COP, selon lesquels la direction du Conseil des patriotes a reçu de l'argent de la part du gouvernement pour annuler la manifestation.



# Français

## L'ANC traite le

manifestation, n'a pas tenu sa promesse. Il a plutôt donné l'ordre aux forces de sécurité pour lancer des gaz lacrymogènes et pulvériser de l'eau chaude sur notre peuple », a dit le parti.

Il accuse le gouvernement de vouloir confisquer la liberté constitutionnelle des citoyens de se réunir et de manifester pacifiquement leur mécontentement, et d'avoir posé les bases des décisions arbitraires futures qui consisteront de révoquer la constitution soit en partie ou en totalité. "C'est inacceptable et ne sera pas toléré", a ajouté l'ANC.

Le parti a qualifié d'infondée l'explication du pouvoir, selon laquelle le recours à la force avait été rendu nécessaire par la tentative des manifestants de cuisiner sur les lieux de la manifestation.

« Selon le bon sens, quand un grand groupe de personnes se rassemble, il est nécessaire de leur donner de la nourriture et de l'eau. Par conséquent, dans notre communiqué de presse du 28 décembre 2019, nous avons appelé le gouvernement et le COP à négocier la logistique de la manifestation qui couvre également la mise à disposition de la nourriture et de l'eau. Si ces questions logistiques avaient été discutées et si ces discussions avaient abouti à un consensus, la violence qui s'est produite aujourd'hui n'aurait peut-être pas eu lieu. Le gouvernement est entièrement responsable pour avoir infligé des préjudices et des blessures à ses citoyens qui, des heures durant, sont restés pacifiques pendant leur manifestation. Le droit de se réunir pacifiquement accordé aux Libériens par notre constitution ne peut être abrogé par aucun gouvernement, sauf en cas d'état d'urgence », a déclaré l'ANC.

Le parti s'est dit également préoccupé par les informations indiquant que la Police nationale du Libéria (LNP) aurait saisi des armes à feu et d'autres articles illégaux prétendument retrouvés dans le véhicule du représentant Yekeh Koluba.

« Bien que la police ait le droit d'ouvrir des investigations pour des crimes ou des allégations de crimes, nous voulons leur faire savoir que nous

n'accepterons aucun complot contre nos partisans pour les accuser faussement de crimes en vue de les réduire au silence. L'opposition ne laissera pas intimider », a averti le parti.

« Nous continuerons de demander à ce gouvernement de rendre compte et, le cas échéant, épuiseront tous les moyens légaux afin qu'il améliore les conditions de vie de notre peuple. Encore une fois, le Libéria est tout ce que nous avons et en tant que parti, l'ANC continuera de s'opposer à tout abus du pouvoir de la part du régime actuel. Nous dénoncerons toute tentative d'oppression et de dérive dictatoriale qui risque de compromettre la paix dans notre pays », a-t-il conclu.

Le pouvoir, pour sa part, a accusé les manifestants d'avoir un agenda caché. Le président de la Coalition au pouvoir, Mulbah Morlu, a déclaré que le fait que les manifestants ont voulu faire la cuisine sur les lieux de la manifestation est la preuve qu'ils avaient un agenda caché « qui était bien plus important qu'une simple manifestation ».

Animant un point de presse à Monrovia le mardi 7 janvier, le président Morlu a déclaré : « nulle part dans l'histoire du monde, des manifestants ont tenté de faire du feu dans un tel lieu, si ce n'est qu'au Libéria, et ce, en raison de la tolérance dont le président George Manneh Weah continue de faire montre ».

« Aujourd'hui, les manifestants peuvent descendre dans les rues de Monrovia sans être harcelés par les forces de sécurité. Pendant notre lutte sous le régime de la présidente Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, j'ai été emprisonnée 14 fois rien que pour avoir parlé contre le pouvoir. Mais eux, ils ont tenté de faire du feu dans un endroit qui abritent le palais présidentiel, le temple de la justice, le palais de l'Assemblée nationale, les ministères des Affaires étrangères et de l'Information et l'université du Libéria, sans qu'ils fassent l'objet d'arrestation. Ils devraient être reconnaissants envers le président Weah pour cette sorte de démocratie moderne dont les Libériens jouissent aujourd'hui », a déclaré le président de la coalition au pouvoir.

## COMMENTAIRE

Par Jeffrey D. Sachs

### Amérique-Iran, l'obsession dangereuse

**N**EW YORK - Après avoir ordonné l'assassinat du général Qassem Soleimani, alors que celui-ci se trouvait en mission officielle en Irak, le président américain Donald Trump a été largement félicité par un Parti républicain très patriote. Les assassinats dictés par les gouvernements contre des dirigeants étrangers, chefs religieux et autres journalistes sont monnaie courante dans le monde d'aujourd'hui. La soif américaine de sang iranien est néanmoins toute particulière. C'est en effet une obsession vieille de 40 ans qui pousse actuellement l'Amérique et l'Iran au bord de la guerre.

La psychose des États-Unis vis-à-vis de l'Iran remonte à la Révolution islamique de 1979, lors de laquelle des étudiants iraniens ont assailli l'ambassade américaine à Téhéran, et détenu en otages 52 ressortissants américains pendant plus d'un an. Ce traumatisme a rendu psychologiquement impossible pour les dirigeants américains tout calibrage de leurs politiques. C'est ainsi que Trump menace depuis peu (ce qui serait un crime de guerre) de détruire en Iran 52 cibles parmi lesquelles des sites culturels, une pour chaque otage de 1979, si Téhéran décide de venger l'assassinat de Soleimani.

Trump se prévaut du droit d'éliminer un dirigeant dans un pays étranger, puis de commettre un crime de guerre si l'Iran se livre à des représailles. Et cette criminalité est largement applaudie aux États-Unis, ce qui illustre l'existence d'un syndrome de stress post-traumatique dans le système politique américain, du moins à droite, comparable au déclenchement hasardeux par l'Amérique de guerres au Moyen-Orient après les attentats terroristes du 11 septembre 2001.

L'instabilité psychologique propre à Donald Trump ajoute à cette furie. N'oublions pas la célèbre déclaration du président américain selon laquelle il pourrait abattre quelqu'un sur la Cinquième avenue « sans perdre aucun électeur ». Désormais commanditaire de l'assassinat de Soleimani, il semble déterminé à mettre cette déclaration à l'épreuve.

Ce que l'opinion américaine et la plupart des élites politiques aux États-Unis ne parviennent pas à saisir, c'est que l'Amérique a commis bien plus de crimes contre l'Iran que l'inverse. Les États-Unis ont volontairement et très imprudemment créé un ennemi, pour aucune autre raison que leurs propres agissements malavisés.

Pour commencer, les États-Unis et le Royaume-Uni renversent le gouvernement iranien en 1953, après que le Premier ministre démocratiquement élu Mohammad Mossadegh ait œuvré pour reprendre le contrôle du pétrole iranien, dont l'empire britannique a pris possession. L'Amérique remplace ensuite la démocratie renversée en installant le régime autoritaire du Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, soutenu par la SAVAK, violent organe de renseignement et de police secrète. Ce régime restera en place pendant un quart de siècle, de 1953 à 1978. Les étudiants iraniens occuperont l'ambassade de Téhéran après le départ du Shah, admis aux États-Unis pour traitement médical.

L'année suivante, les États-Unis arment et encouragent l'Irak de Saddam Hussein à envahir l'Iran, déclenchant une guerre longue de près d'une décennie, qui fera environ 500 000 morts chez les Iraniens. En 2014, quelque 75 000 Iraniens seront encore soignés pour des blessures liées aux attaques chimiques employées par Saddam.

Les États-Unis frapperont également des cibles civiles. En 1988, l'armée américaine abat l'avion de ligne Iran Air 655, pourtant facilement identifiable comme un Airbus A300 si les Américains avaient pris les précautions adaptées, tuant 290 passagers. Puis en 1995, la population iranienne devient soumise à

de lourdes sanctions économiques américaines, qui depuis n'ont jamais été levées, et qui au contraire se sont resserrées au fil du temps.

La dynamique se poursuivra après les attentats du 11 septembre. L'Iran soutiendra l'invasion américaine en Afghanistan, destinée à éliminer les talibans, puis approuvera le nouveau président mis en place par les États-Unis, Hamid Karzai. Pourtant, en janvier 2002, le président américain George W. Bush décrira l'Iran comme partie intégrante de « l'Axe du mal », aux côtés de l'Irak de Saddam et de la Corée du Nord.

De même, plutôt que de faire pression sur tous les pays du Moyen-Orient, Israël inclus (qui possède d'après les estimations 80 ogives nucléaires), pour que ceux-ci se conforment au Traité de non-prolifération des armes nucléaires, et plutôt que d'œuvrer pour une région entièrement dénucléarisée, les États-Unis exerceront la pression exclusivement sur l'Iran.

Puis en 2015, les États-Unis du président Barack Obama, aux côtés du Royaume-Uni, de la France, de la Chine, de la Russie et de l'Allemagne, négocieront avec l'Iran un accord en vertu duquel le régime de Téhéran consentira à cesser ses activités de retraitement nucléaire en échange d'une levée des sanctions économiques américaines et étrangères. Le Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies soutiendra unanimement l'accord nucléaire, officiellement baptisé Plan d'action global conjoint (JCPOA). Le secrétaire d'État américain Mike Pompeo lui-même qualifiera le JCPOA de nouvelle apaisante. Or, voici que Trump sortira de l'accord en 2018, l'Amérique étant le seul pays signataire à s'en retirer, pour ensuite resserrer dramatiquement les sanctions américaines.

L'alourdissement des sanctions n'a pas pour objectif de modifier les comportements de l'Iran, mais d'anéantir l'économie iranienne, dans une démarche de déstabilisation du régime. L'Iran connaît désormais une dépression engendrée par les États-Unis, son PIB ayant chuté de 14 % entre 2017 et 2019, et l'inflation ayant atteint 36 % en 2019 (deux pourcentages issus des récentes estimations du FMI), sur fond de graves pénuries de médicaments et autres produits vitaux. Pendant ce temps, pourtant sortis du JCPOA, les États-Unis continuent d'insister pour que l'Iran se conforme à leurs conditions.

Ne semblant avoir aucune conscience de l'histoire, et conduits par un président émotionnellement déséquilibré, persuadé de pouvoir commettre impunément un meurtre en plein jour, les États-Unis agissent encore aujourd'hui sur la base d'un traumatisme psychologique vieux de 40 ans.

Le monde doit aujourd'hui se remémorer les paroles judicieuses et intemporelles d'un président américain taillé dans une toute autre étoffe. En juin 1963, quelques mois seulement avant d'être victime de son assassin, John F. Kennedy s'adresse au Parlement irlandais :

Au-delà des golfes et des barrières qui nous divisent, nous ne devons pas oublier qu'il n'existe aucun ennemi permanent. L'hostilité est aujourd'hui une réalité, mais pas une règle absolue. La réalité suprême de notre époque réside dans notre indivisibilité en tant qu'enfants de Dieu, et dans notre vulnérabilité commune sur cette planète.

Aucune raison ne saurait justifier l'impossibilité d'une paix entre l'Iran et les États-Unis. En construisant sur les fondations de l'accord nucléaire de 2015, et sur les nombreux intérêts communs aux deux pays, une relation nouvelle est encore possible. Les représailles iraniennes étant malheureusement en cours de préparation, il est aujourd'hui particulièrement crucial que l'Union européenne ne suive pas l'imprudente administration Trump dans son escalade susceptible de conduire à la guerre.

**MORE HEADLINE NEWS**

**MORE HEADLINE NEWS**

**Police charge several protesters**

By Winston W. Parley

Several protesters have been charged by police here and subsequently incarcerated at the Monrovia Central Prison for multiple counts, following peaceful protest staged Monday, 6 January by the Council of Patriots (COP)

second biggest assembly led by the COP in less than a year was held to demand President George Manneh Weah to tackle corruption, publish his assets, dismiss some of his key cabinet officials, and give the outcome of an audit into US\$25m mop-up exercise conducted.

site between the Executive Mansion and the Legislature.

Police have listed in the charge sheet defendants Josiah Tarphen, Sr., Aaron Kennedy, Emmanuel Johnson, Josiah Tarphen and Alexander Sampson as the accused.

After using teargas to disperse the protesters, police say one 9mm pistol was found in a light green Toyota RAV4 with license plate HOR-65, which is allegedly owned by opposition lawmaker and key COP member Rep. Yekeh Kolubah.

Further, police say another 99mm pistol bearing the name "High Point" was found in an abandoned white Ford Ranger with license number A619132 that was recovered from the scene.

The police indicate in the charge sheet that at about 1623 hours on the day of the protest, joint security members realized that COP members lit fire and were now cooking at the front of the Capitol Hill and Executive Mansion corridor.

According to the police, the cooking was being done not distant from a blue KIA motor which had on it a drum of gasoline which was hazardous to every other persons within that corridor.

According to the police, the

**▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9**



which later turned violent.

The protesters have been charged with riot, failure to disperse, recklessly endangering another person and disorderly conduct and were sent to court Thursday, 9 January.

The protest which is the

But it turned violent and resulted to the injuries of others after joint securities used teargas canisters and water cannon against the protesters following a disagreement with the protesters' demand to cook, eat and sleep at their protest

**WASH Network wants Last Well probed**

The Liberia Civil Society Organizations on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (CSOS WASH) Network calls on the Government of Liberia, especially the WASH Legislative Caucus, to constitute a joint independent investigative committee comprising CSOs, N-WASH Commission, the Liberia Anti Corruption Commission and the Ministry of Justice, among others, to investigate claims and counter-claims over Last

Robertfield Highway in Margibi County.

The WASH Network says it has worked over the years to end fragmentation within the WASH Sector by advocating for the establishment of the National WASH Commission, which has the mandate to promote and regulate the development and management of WASH services in Liberia.

The WASH Commission on December 19, 2019 published an investigation it conducted in Bong and Grand Gedeh



Chairman Augustine N. Myers

Well projects in Liberia.

The Network also wants several public institutions, officials and private individuals, among others to be summoned by the WASH Legislative Caucus to show cause why, if any, they should not be held in contempt for either over stepping their respective duties or undermining mandates of others about Last Well's projects in Liberia.

The WASH Network reached the decision at a recent Executive Session hosted by its board chair, Madam Malinda B. Joss in Duazon, Sand Beach Community along the

Counties from February 2019 to December 19, 2019 about Last Well's claims to have provided over 2 million persons with access to safe drinking water in five counties in the country.

According to reports, Last Well claimed to have provided over two million persons in Grand Kru, Bomi, Gbarpolu, Bong, and Gedeh Counties with safe drinking water.

But the Commission dismissed the claim as misleading, noting that total population of the five counties combined is only 684,159 people, far less than two million persons.

**Minister Wlue cautions traffic warrant officers**

By Emmanuel Mondaye

Liberia's first road traffic warrant operation has been launched here, with Transport Minister Samuel Wlue cautioning traffic warrant officers not to consider themselves as officers of the Liberia National Police (LNP).

The traffic warrant officers are responsible to patrol the streets of Monrovia and call in the Traffic Division of the Liberia National Police (LNP) on broken down vehicles and other movable objects to prevent accidents.

Launching the Ministry's traffic warrant operations on Wednesday, 8 January in Monrovia, Mr. Wlue cautioned the personnel to be aware that they are not police officers.

He informs the personnel that they don't have any arresting power and as such, they should not use the orange and blue uniforms to operate as traffic police officers.

Minister Wlue wishes the personnel success as they embark on a new journey of



ensuring that broken down vehicles are immediately removed from the streets through the help of the LNP traffic section.

Minister Wlue notes that money used to purchase the 23 JC125GY motorbikes came through the National Road Funds of Liberia, adding that Liberians can now see their taxes at work.

Mr. John Saah, LNP Chief of Traffic who proxy for Police Inspector General Col. Patrick Sudue, challenges the traffic warrant officers to praticalize the skills learned during their training at the Liberia National Police Training Academy in Paynesville.

He assures the police's full

**▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9**

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# Former Deputy Gender Minister donates food items to less fortunate girls

By Winston W. Parley

Former Deputy Gender Minister for Social Outreach Mrs. Lucia Massalee Yallah has presented to the Ministry of Gender a donation of multiple food items intended for less fortunate girls at the Gbalatuah Mission in Bong County as a Christmas food drive.

She made the donation of several 25kg bags of rice, cornflakes, juices, milk, butter, gem, tomato paste, among several others Thursday, 9 January during a brief ceremony inside former President Ellen Johnson - Sirleaf's compound at Fish Market.

She says this is the first donation, and in just three weeks of mobilizing donors, she sees how overwhelming support she got, assuring that this is something she got to continue this year.

She notes that the Vulnerable Girls' Program is a program that is being run by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection.

Madam Yallah served as Deputy Gender Minister during the administration of former President Sirleaf.

Though she has left the ministry upon the expiry of Mrs. Sirleaf's administration, Madam Yallah says the less fortunate girls at the Mission are still [dear] to her heart.

During the Christmas seasons, she says she decided to do this food drive which received overwhelming support from donors who did not want to be named.

"Besides this food drive for the girls at Gbalatuah, we

also decided to... give some of the food to students at Todee Presbyterian Mission and Bromley Mission," she discloses.

Madam Yallah narrates further that this donation is just intended to help the girls, adding that to see girls being productive and achieving their dreams is her passion.

"Even though I left [Gender Ministry], but these girls are still in my heart. I still think about them, I still check on their welfare. I still make sure that they are in school and achieving," she adds.

The former Deputy Gender Minister assures the girls at the Missions that they still got her support and that there are people in the community and in this country that still are there to support them.

She encourages them not to give up or think that they

are out there all by themselves, noting that people are here to reach out to them in whichever way they can.

"When we wrote people we told them we wanted dry food items, nothing perishable. So and this is what we have," she says.

Receiving the items on behalf of Gender Ministry, Madam Edwina T. Mulbah - Buckett, Coordinator for Vulnerable Girls' Program expressed thanks to Madam Yallah for the donation.

She expresses hope that Madam Yallah will continue to support the girls, noting that the donated items are important to the Ministry because they will be used for the girls on the missions directly. She concludes that the donation also helps to motivate less fortunate girls to stay in school.



# Fire guts Love

Starts from back-page

church edifice, and a cafeteria, explained that they had entered the house and the kids were already sleeping in their various rooms when she heard an alarm that there was fire!

"I said where?; I saw Joshua offing the fire, using water and sand, so I asked how are the children?", she narrates.

According to her, before she could get in the house to get the children outside, the fire had spread in the entire building. "God is so good; people came and helped and everybody got outside", Madam Wreh continues.

When asked whether there was cooking going on in the kitchen or something of such, she replies, "There was no cooking going on; the

generator that we have is diesel, so when we saw that the fire was intensifying, we just cut it (generator) off."

She said fire fighters subsequently arrived on the scene and prevented the fire from spreading to the other buildings inside the compound.

Now, the 42 kids and other occupants of the compound are without food, water, and clothing, as everything was consumed in the fire.

As this writer was led on a tour of the burnt facility, carpenters were busy hurriedly preparing some of the classrooms for the kids and the staff to sleep, as temporary shelters.

Madam Wreh disclosed that the Love a Child Orphanage was established on March 4, 1994, initially

with 28 kids, most of them brought in by poor parents and relatives. "We also receive some from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection", she adds.

She says besides academic programs, the orphanage also provides vocational training such as tailoring, tie & dyeing, crocheting and embroidery, among others for the kids.

Meanwhile, Madam Wreh appeals to President George Manneh Weah, the Government of Liberia, philanthropists, foreign embassies accredited near Monrovia, and Non-governmental Organizations for urgent assistance.

"We need food, mattresses, finances, clothes and everything for the children", she pleads.

# CT Com Liberia Inc.

Starts from back-page

Mr. Onanuga encourages the Ministry to put in more time by working harder in preventing illicit and other unauthorized mining activities which are causing serious damage to the country's economic growth.

He expresses gratitude to Minister Muray and other senior officials of the Ministry for their dedicated services being rendered the country and its people, adding that he has no doubt that the motorbikes donated would be wisely used to monitor the situations.

Mr. Onanuga notes that some of the areas in which unauthorized mining is taking place are places that are suitable for tourism and other activities that would attract foreign nationals to make investments.

Receiving the donated motorbikes from Mr. Onanuga, the Minister of Mines and Energy Mr. Gester E. Muray thanked the CT Com Liberia Inc. Chief Executive Officer for the items, saying the donation is timely as it will enhance the

work of the Ministry.

He discloses that his Ministry along with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and local authorities through the country held a meeting and resolved that by February 2020, there should [be] no unauthorized mining activities at all sites of mining in Liberia.

He assures Mr. Onanuga that the Ministry would use the motorbikes to enforce, monitor, and fight unauthorized mining activities in every part of the country in order to save the country's land and resources.

Also speaking during the ceremony, the Assistant Minister for Mines Mr. Emmanuel T. T. Swen who received the keys of the motorbikes, praised Mr. Onanuga for the donation.

He discloses that the Ministry will use the motorbikes to implement government enforcement power on illicit and other unauthorized miners who are creating serious problem for the country.—*Edited by Winston W. Parley*

# Minister Wlue cautions

Cont'd from page 10

cooperation in the timely execution of the work of the traffic warrant officers, noting that he is pleased with the working relationship that exists between the LNP and the Transports Ministry since Minister Wlue's appointment as the administrative head of the Ministry.

He further cautioned the ministry's personnel to first preserve [their own] lives so that they will also be able to preserve the lives of the public.

"Ridding the motorbikes is one thing and implementing what you acquire is another. It is because of you that four of these motorbikes are assigned with the traffic section of the police [for] efficiency and

effectiveness," he says.

In attendance were several senior officials of the Ministry including Deputy Minister for Administration and Insurance Mr. Sirleaf R. Tyler, Deputy Minister for Land and Rail Transport Mr. J. Darius Kollie, Assistant Minister for Administration and Insurance Nuwoe A. D. Scott and Madam Charlotte Davis, Supervisor, Driver License Section, among others.

Meanwhile, Minister Wlue has disclosed that the Ministry will also extend the operations to other parts of the country to ensure that broken down vehicles are removed from major highways.—*Edited by Winston W. Parley*

# Police charge

Cont'd from page 10

failure of the joint security to act would have rendered the security ineffective and not in the interest of providing that much security that the COP was promised.

Despite the involvement of the Independent Human Rights Commission through its coordinator Adama Dempster to ask the COP to put off the fire, police say the protesters partly yielded to the intervention but suddenly blaze the fire much more that they had earlier.

Following failed intervention by both the police

and the commission, the investigators say the police resolved to use its water cannon to put off the fire.

According to the police, it was during this time that protesters allegedly started to throw stones at the joint security which again had to announce that protesters should leave the streets because they had become violent. The police say the protesters were in active aggression when they were arrested.

## CT Com Liberia Inc. CEO donates to Mines & Energy Ministry



By Emmanuel Mondaye

Mr. Christopher H. S. Onanuga, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of CT Com Liberia inc. situated in Paynesville has presented five brand new TVS motorbikes to the Minister of Mines and Energy Mr. Gester E. Muray to enhance the operations of the Ministry. Presenting the motorbikes, Mr. Onanuga

disclosed that his donation comes in the wake of information that the country's forest and tourist attraction areas are being destroyed by mining activities which pose grave threat to the sectors. He says it is unfortunate and regrettable that individuals and some entities are damaging the sector which is very key to the

economic growth and development of the country.

According to him, after a careful assessment of the situation by his institution, he decided to provide the motorbikes to the Ministry to enable it to monitor and enforce the mining law of the country to prevent a devastating situation in the sector.

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## Fire guts Love a Child Orphanage

### -42 kids escape death

By Jonathan Browne

Forty-two children at the Love a Child Orphanage in Gbengbah Town, along the Robertsfield Highway narrowly escaped death late Wednesday, 08 January, including the proprietress of the orphanage, Madam Rebecca R. Wreh and her immediate relatives when

fire gutted their 10-room dormitory and an apartment annex at 10:56 PM.

The fire, which allegedly started in the ceiling of the dormitory, razed the entire roof of the building to the ground, destroying food, including 100 bags of rice, several dozen gallons of cooking oil, three freezers, bags of used clothes for the



kids, mattresses and cash totaling hundreds of thousands of United States Dollars and Liberian Dollars, respectively.

The cause of the fire has not been established. But narrating the ordeal to the New Dawn on Thursday, 09 January, Madam Wreh, flanked by relatives, sympathizers, friends and neighbors inside the compound that hosts the dormitory, a high school, a

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