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Weah bans official travels

-As Blama seeks help at Redemption Hospital



COVID-19

Suspended EPA Executive Director Dr. Nathaniel Blama



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Continental News

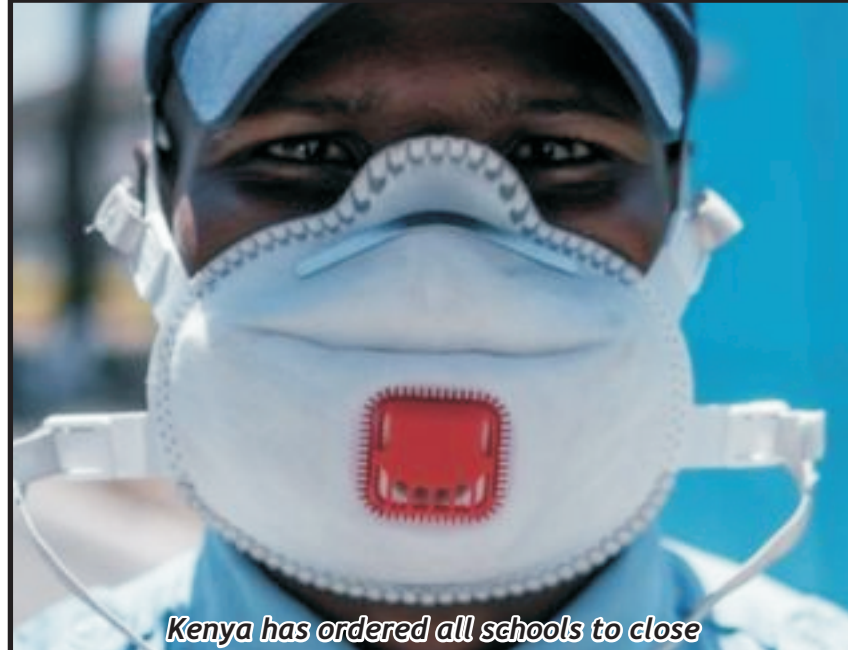
Africa imposes strict measures over coronavirus

Several African states have imposed far-reaching restrictions in a bid to curb the spread of coronavirus. South Africa has declared a national disaster and announced a ban on travel from the worst-affected countries, while Kenya has also imposed sweeping travel restrictions.

The measures are an attempt to prevent a major outbreak on a continent with poor health services. At least 27 African states have so far been affected by the virus. Liberia, Somalia and Tanzania are the latest African countries to report cases.

In total, nearly 350 people have been diagnosed with the virus across Africa. Seven people have died while 42 have recovered, the World Health Organization (WHO) said.

Most of the cases involve people arriving from Europe and North America. What



Kenya has ordered all schools to close

happened in South Africa? South Africa has imposed the most severe restrictions on its citizens since the end of white-minority rule after reporting its first local transmission, increasing the number of cases to 62. In an address to the nation on Sunday, President Cyril Ramaphosa declared a national disaster. "Initially, it was people

who had travelled out of the country, especially from Italy, who had positively tested for the virus," he said.

"It is concerning that we are now dealing with internal transmission of the virus," Mr Ramaphosa said. Mr Ramaphosa said he would chair a government command council that would

"coordinate all aspects of our extraordinary emergency response".

Among the measures he announced are: The closure of nearly half -

35 out of 72 - of South Africa's land border crossings from Monday, along with two of its eight sea ports

Banning foreign nationals from eight countries - including the UK and US - from entering South Africa from Wednesday

Advising people to avoid domestic travel

Shutting all schools with immediate effect until the end of the Easter holidays

Banning all public gatherings of more than 100 with immediate effect. This would affect the biggest annual event in South Africa - an Easter religious service attended by several million followers of the Zion Christian Church at its headquarters in northern Limpopo province. South Africans have

been waiting for this moment - of transparency, decisiveness and leadership. President Ramaphosa's strict measures are seen as a clear message that his government is finally taking the coronavirus crisis seriously. There were concerns that it had been dithering since the first case was detected 10 days ago.

To be fair to the government, South Africa, like much of Africa, has not been severely affected so far. But the mood has changed, with health officials reporting that the number of cases is rising at an alarming rate.

Health Minister Zweli Mkhize has called on South Africans to take responsibility for their health and safety, and that of fellow citizens. And with good reason - the public health sector, which caters for about 80% of the country's mainly poor population, is overstretched. It will not be able to cope with a huge outbreak. BBC

Nigeria gas explosion leaves 15 dead

At least 15 people have been confirmed dead and many others injured after an explosion at a gas processing plant on Sunday in Nigeria's commercial capital Lagos.

The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) said the explosion was caused by a truck that hit gas cylinders piled up at the plant in Abule Ado area in Lagos. The gas plant is located near an oil pipeline.

The impact of the explosion damaged parts of the pipeline prompting the state oil company to halt operations of the pipeline, Reuters news agency reports.

Some 50 buildings were destroyed after a fire broke out following the explosion, according to national emergency services spokesman Ibrahim Farinloye.

A school in the neighbourhood that accommodates 250 students

was among those affected by the fire, AFP reports. Rescue workers have removed rubble from the school.

An official of the Nigerian Red Cross confirmed to the BBC's Jessica Nwankwo that some students were injured at the school.

A nearby resident, Abibola Ayo, told AFP that he heard the blast at his house 3km (2 miles) away from the scene. BBC



The explosion happened at a gas processing plant near a pipeline

Abducted Canadian and Italian turn up safe in Mali

A Canadian woman and an Italian man kidnapped in Burkina Faso in 2018 are said to be in good health and spirits after arriving in neighbouring Mali.

Édith Blais and Luca Tacchetto, both in their 30s, apparently escaped and were picked up by UN forces before being transferred to Mali's capital, Bamako.

They appeared bemused when officials greeted them with elbows, before the pair were told of new social etiquette measures to help curb coronavirus.

Mali said no ransom had been paid.

None of the many jihadist groups in the region has claimed responsibility for the kidnapping. Plans are now being made to repatriate the couple. In a statement, Canadian Foreign Minister François-Philippe Champagne said that "Canada is very relieved" that the pair "are now free from captivity".

He thanked the governments of Burkina Faso and Mali, as well as the UN mission in Mali and other partners for "their assistance and co-operation over the past year in this matter". The



pair were wearing clothes of the regional Tuareg people and apparently stopped a passing car and told the driver to take them to the nearest UN post, according to AFP news agency.

However, Ms Blais and Mr Tacchetto have not publicly spoken about how they escaped captivity.

They disappeared on 15 December 2018 in the city of Bobo-Dioulasso.

At the time they were travelling in Western Africa and were making their way to Togo for a humanitarian project. Canada has issued travel advice for Burkina Faso, due to terrorism and kidnapping. BBC

EDITORIAL

Playing game with COVID-19

THE GOVERNMENT OF Liberia's poor handling of the first officially confirmed case of the deadly coronavirus in Liberia is not only worrisome, but highly irresponsible.

PRESIDENT GEORGE MANNEH Weah in a nationwide address Monday, 16 March reported that Liberia has recorded its first confirmed case of COVID-19, involving the executive director of the Environmental Protection Agency, Nathaniel Blama, who chose not to be quarantined by health authorities at the Roberts International Airport in Margibi County after testing positive immediately upon arrival.

MR. BLAMA ARRIVED here Friday night, 12 March via Air Brussels from an international conference in Europe. The authorities say other officials who were with him on the same flight are being traced for quarantine to avoid spread of the infection.

WE ARE DISAPPOINTED by news that the EPA boss also refused to board ambulance that went to his residence to take him to an observation center; instead, preferring to ride behind the health convoy in his official vehicle. Health Minister Doctor Wilhemina S. Jallah, briefing reporters Monday, said Mr. Blama "slipped thru" health regulations at the airport and went home.

ARE WE SERIOUS in fighting the COVID-19 and protecting the public from mass infections that could wreck this country that is already faced by poor health system due to lack of capacity? Or is the current scenario a smokescreen to attract international sympathy, solidarity and support?

WHY WOULD A government with well intension to avoid its citizens from getting infected and dying allowed officials to willfully ignore and defile regulations and public safety measures? President Weah should go beyond mere suspension and have Mr. Blama charged and prosecuted for his uncouth behavior and display of wicked arrogance.

THE NATIONAL PUBLIC Health Institute of Liberia should strengthen and enforce its surveillance measures without fear or favor, for disease knows no border. From Wuhan, China the COVID-19 has spread to over 10 countries globally, including the United States. Death tolls in the U.S. are in the hundreds, while Italy has lost more than a 1,000 people.

THE GOVERNMENT OF Liberia needs to put its act together and gets firm in handling the current nightmare at our doorstep, void of status. An infected Nathaniel Blama or any other person poses serious risk to the public and must be quarantined.

BESIDES BLAMA, WE don't know how many others may have "slipped thru" at the RIA or other port of entries in the country, and are posing risk to the public.

EBOLA KILLED OVER 4,000 of our people between 13 and 14, wrecked the economy, and left many others parentless. The issue of COVID-19 is nothing to joke with as a country because its impacts are being felt around the world.

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COMMENTARY

By Arkebe Oqubay

When COVID-19 Comes to Africa

There is no telling how long it will take to bring the COVID-19 coronavirus under control, or how many people will be affected. But African governments, in cooperation with communities and international actors, can take steps now to limit the damage - and lay the foundations for a healthier, more resilient future.

ADDIS ABABA - The COVID-19 coronavirus - which has now spread to more than 100 countries - has pushed the world into "uncharted territory," according to World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom. So far, Africa has recorded relatively few infections, but there is no reason to believe this won't change. When it does, the results could be catastrophic.²

One need only recall the West African Ebola epidemic of 2014-2016 to comprehend the potential damage. The hardest-hit countries were Guinea (with 3,814 cases and 2,544 deaths), Liberia (10,678 cases and 4,810 deaths), and Sierra Leone (14,124 cases and 3,956 deaths). Moreover, since August 2018, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has faced its own large-scale Ebola epidemic, with more than 3,444 cases and 2,264 deaths (as of March 10, 2020).

While Ebola has a far higher mortality rate than COVID-19, the latter's rapid spread shows that it, too, can quickly spin out of control, causing serious social and economic disruptions. The infection rate in China, for example, began to decline only after weeks of consistent bold measures, active community mobilization, and "draconian" lockdown measures. Whether the virus is truly contained remains to be seen.

For Africa, the race to prepare is on. This means urgently applying the lessons of recent Ebola outbreaks - beginning by recognizing that weak national health systems make a bad problem worse. Many have too little money, infrastructure, and expertise. As the researchers Peter Piot and Julia Spencer, together with Liberian doctor Moses J. Soka, put it, "countries must strengthen their core capacities to prevent, detect, and respond to outbreaks, with commensurate domestic and, where needed, international investments."

But direct investment in health-care infrastructure and services is only the first step. The fight against Ebola was often hampered by its social context, including community dynamics, local beliefs, political instability, economic fragilities, and lack of trust in government and institutions. Efforts to boost the public's knowledge and confidence are thus critical to the effectiveness of any COVID-19 response strategy.

People need to know, for example, that basic behavioral changes - especially frequent and thorough hand washing, coughing into one's elbow, and avoiding crowds - can make a big difference. They must recognize that medical masks offer little protection to the general public, and that attempts to hoard them have led to price gouging and shortages for health-care professionals. And they must understand that a fully vetted vaccine is still a long way off.

Consistent, credible messaging - coordinated among influential community elders, religious leaders, media, and local government officials - is thus vitally important. And health officials must share information about the progress of the virus, and the measures being taken to contain it, in a timely and transparent manner.

But the imperative extends beyond keeping the public informed. As Piot, Spencer, and Soka acknowledge, communities must be "engaged and empowered" as primary partners in preparedness and response activities. This approach will help to advance another priority: adapting measures to local conditions, including cultural norms, community structures, prevalent occupations,

mobility, the political environment, and the capacity of health systems.

All of this will require decisive leadership. Rather than leave the response to health ministries, African heads of government should establish high-level committees or task forces to streamline decision-making and resource mobilization, including by facilitating coordination among government bodies. My country, Ethiopia, has already established such a high-level task force, and organized national diagnostic and laboratory facilities, despite having no confirmed cases.

If managed well, the COVID-19 response will result in stronger health-care systems that are far better equipped to keep populations healthy in normal times - and to respond to inevitable future crises. But, to be successful, African governments will need outside support.

The WHO has provided guidance on how to fight COVID-19. By coordinating with the African Union Commission and regional organizations, it will be better able to mobilize resources from its international partners.

More experienced governments (especially China's) and better-resourced agencies (such as the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) should also offer advice and support. To facilitate effective decision-making, African health ministries must keep all relevant agencies fully informed about the situation on the ground.

A comprehensive COVID-19 response must also account for the pandemic's economic consequences. Already, oil prices are plummeting - bad news for Africa's producers. Moreover, supply-chain disruptions augur declining exports. The damage to the travel and tourism sectors is just beginning to show.

Many African airlines have already suspended flights to China, contrary to the advice of the WHO and the International Air Transport Association. But others have not. Notably, Ethiopian Airlines, Africa's largest carrier (and the biggest in terms of passenger transport between China and Africa), has introduced new health-inspection protocols and preventative procedures, including at departure points - a process that has required close collaboration with the Chinese authorities. Pilots and cabin crew have received training on protecting themselves and their passengers. The company's top management has established task forces whose work is reviewed daily, and its board reviews the situation weekly.

This aligns with Ethiopian Airlines' policy during the Ebola epidemic, when it also decided not to suspend flights. But as the COVID-19 situation evolves, the carrier may have to change its approach - to curb potentially incurring large losses. Many companies may face similar decisions in the coming weeks. To safeguard their economies, African governments must act now, working with think tanks and regional organizations to design effective solutions.

There is no telling how long it will take to bring COVID-19 under control, or how many people will be affected. But African governments, in cooperation with communities and international actors, can take steps now to limit the damage - and lay the foundations for a healthier, more resilient future.

O-PED

By Daron Acemoglu

The Post-Trump Agenda

The stakes in November's US presidential election are high, given how much damage to America and the world a second Trump term could cause. But even if Trump is defeated, Americans must address the deeper problems that made his presidency possible.

CAMBRIDGE - The experience of the past three years has shattered the myth that the US Constitution on its own can protect American democracy from a narcissistic, unpredictable, polarizing, and authoritarian president. But the country's problems are not limited to the menace in the White House. All Americans also bear responsibility for the current state of affairs, because we have neglected critical institutions and ignored the intensifying structural weaknesses that created the conditions for a demagogue like Trump to emerge in the first place.

At least three major fault lines underlie America's current structural problems. The first is economic. In the decades after World War II, the United States achieved not only rapid but also broadly shared growth, with wages for most workers tracking increases in productivity at a rate of around 2% per year, on average. This growth was bolstered by labor-market institutions such as minimum wages and unions, and by technological changes that generated good (high-paying, secure) jobs for the majority of US workers.

These institutional arrangements started to come apart in the 1980s. Good jobs began to disappear, inequality began widening, median real (inflation-adjusted) wages stagnated, and real wages for low-education workers actually started to fall. A variety of factors drove this turnaround, including the erosion of the federal minimum wage, new laws and court rulings undercutting collective bargaining, changes in wage-setting norms, trade with China and offshoring, and automation.

Cheap imports and automation technologies initially reduced employment in many light industries, such as textiles, apparel, and furniture. But with the spread of robotics technologies, heavy industries soon followed. Historically, the decline of some industries had been met by the creation of new ones offering good jobs to at least some of the displaced workers. But that process began breaking down in the 1980s. Since then, and especially since around 2000, the burden of economic change has increasingly fallen on middle-class (and often white) communities.

The second fault line is political. The democratic system could have given a voice to economically disadvantaged Americans, thus providing a corrective to the aforementioned economic trends. But the system failed for a variety of reasons, not least because political power was redistributed away from middle-class voters over the past few decades.

Many attribute that shift to the increasing role of "money politics" - campaign contributions, traditional lobbying, and the elimination of constraints on corporate political spending by the Supreme Court's notorious Citizens United decision in 2010. But an even more fundamental factor may have been the rise of "status politics," whereby political power accrues disproportionately to well-to-do, highly educated, coastal elites. Tech entrepreneurs, Wall Street tycoons, and management consultants have become increasingly influential in Washington, DC, not just because they are rich but because they seem to represent enlightened competency.

A third fault line concerns the loss of trust in institutions. American institutions and high-status elites not only failed to avert the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent recession; they were complicit in it. When the crash came, millions of families lost their homes and livelihoods while Wall Street was bailed out.

These are the conditions that gave rise to Trump, who might still ride a wave of misinformation to win re-election in November, especially if the opposition remains fractured. But even if Trump is defeated, the task of radically reforming America's economic and political institutions will have only just begun.

What would an effective anti-Trump reform agenda look like? For starters, it must include a plan to generate more good jobs. This objective is different from simply strengthening the social safety net (which is necessary, but insufficient), and it is worlds apart from diversionary schemes like a universal basic income.

Creating good jobs requires increased investments in technologies that raise worker productivity and lead to new employment opportunities. It also requires stronger labor-market institutions and protections for workers, including minimum wages and collective agreements that induce firms to build long-term relationships with their employees, rather than opting for labor-replacing automation or offshoring. By the same token, better regulation and stronger antitrust enforcement would reduce large corporations' labor-market power and foster more competition and innovation, setting the stage for faster labor-demand growth.

The agenda also must include reforms to give a majority of Americans a voice in politics once again. In the 1960s, political scientist Robert A. Dahl concluded that most of the power in local politics resided not with high-status elites or political parties but with regular people who were actively engaged in local issues. That finding may have never been completely true (Dahl's study focused on New Haven, Connecticut); but we should nonetheless aspire to citizen-driven politics.

Here, the priority should be to break the cozy relations between politicians and their CEO, consultant, and financier friends. That will take systematic changes in how access to politicians and top civil servants is regulated, as well as greater transparency at all stages of the policymaking process. Creating new agencies to represent the interests of labor and other neglected constituencies would also be helpful.

Finally, the agenda should increase the independence of America's bureaucracy and judiciary. For example, discretionary appointments by new presidential administrations could be reduced to allow for greater continuity of expertise across agencies; and bipartisan or non-partisan committees of senior judges and legal scholars could decide judicial appointments. Bolstering bureaucratic and judicial autonomy may seem like a paradoxical response to the loss of trust in institutions. But to regain the public's trust, America's institutions must function properly and impartially, and that cannot happen without bureaucratic and judicial expertise.

Much is at stake in the next election. But defeating Trump isn't enough. Americans need to address the root causes of their lost prosperity, flagging democratic participation, and dwindling trust in institutions. The way to do that is not by embracing polarization, but by working toward a broader and more inclusive social compact.

OPINION

By Hans-Werner Sinn

The World Is at War

Western countries are finally waking up to the sheer scale of the COVID-19 crisis, and now must marshal a society-wide response. All countries should be following China in confronting the coronavirus directly with all available resources, and they should take a lesson from Germany in managing the economic fallout.

MUNICH - The fight against COVID-19 is a full-on war. China seems to have won the first battle. Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Japan have also chalked up visible successes in mitigating the outbreak, no doubt owing to their experiences in dealing with the 2003 SARS epidemic. Europe and the United States, on the other hand, are only just awakening from their illusions of invulnerability. As a result, the epidemic is now raging across the West.

The hardest-hit Western country so far is Italy, which has particularly strong economic ties to China. Northern Italy is now the new Wuhan (the Chinese megacity where the coronavirus first emerged). With its health system overwhelmed, the Italian government has slammed on the brakes, shutting down the retail economy and quarantining the entire country. All shops except pharmacies and grocery stores are closed. People have been instructed to stay home and may enter public places only for necessary shopping or commuting to work. Many public and private debt obligations (such as housing rents and interest payments) have been suspended. Italy is attempting to slow down the economic clock until the coronavirus dies out.

Meanwhile, although Germany has had very few coronavirus deaths so far, the number of infections is now skyrocketing as quickly as anywhere else. In response to the crisis, the German government has introduced a short-time work allowance and granted generous credit assistance, guarantees, or tax deferrals for distressed companies. Public events across the country have been canceled. Schoolchildren have been told to stay home. And Austria, for its part, has long since closed its border with Italy. Austrian schools, universities, and most shops have also been closed. Initially, France pursued a more relaxed approach, but it has now also shuttered its schools, restaurants, and shops, as has Spain. Denmark, Poland, and the Czech Republic have closed their borders with Germany.

US President Donald Trump has declared a national state of emergency. Congress has approved an \$8.3 billion emergency program to fund efforts to contain the epidemic. Even larger sums are awaiting passage by the Senate. The federal government has also barred foreign travelers, first from China and Iran, and now from Europe.

Globally, not all responses to the crisis have been well targeted, and others have not been strong enough. Most worryingly, some governments have convinced themselves that they can merely slow down the spread of the virus, rather than taking the steps needed to halt it entirely. The predictable overcrowding of hospitals in many heavily affected areas has already exposed the folly of such complacency.

On the economic front, a severe recession can no longer be avoided, and some economists are already calling for governments to introduce measures to shore up aggregate demand. But that recommendation is inadequate, given that the global economy is suffering from an unprecedented supply shock. People are not at work because they are sick or quarantined. In such a situation, demand stimulus will merely boost inflation, potentially leading to stagflation (weak or falling GDP growth alongside rising prices), as happened during the 1970s oil crisis, when another important production input was in short supply.

Worse, measures targeting the demand side could even be counterproductive, because they would encourage interpersonal contact, thus undermining the effort to limit transmission of the virus. What good would it do to give Italians money for shopping trips, when the government closes the shops and forces everyone to stay home?

The same arguments apply to liquidity support. The world is already awash in liquidity, with nominal interest rates close to or below zero pretty much everywhere. More interest-rate cuts into deep-red territory might help stock markets, but they also could trigger a run on cash.

The brutal decline in economic activities that epidemiologists say is required make crashing stock markets inevitable, given that central banks' policy of excessively cheap money and pooled liabilities caused an unsustainable bubble. Because they used up their ammunition at inopportune moments, central banks bear responsibility for the bubble that has now burst.

What is really needed are fiscal measures to save companies and banks from bankruptcy, so that they can recover quickly once the pandemic is over. Policymakers should be considering various forms of tax relief and public guarantees to help firms borrow if necessary. But the most promising option is a short-time work allowance. This approach, which has been tried and tested in Germany, compensates for the underemployment of the workforce through the same channels that are already used for unemployment insurance. Better yet, it costs hardly anything, because it prevents the losses that would follow from increased real unemployment. All countries should be replicating this part of Germany's policy to prevent job losses.

But, most important, all governments need to follow China in taking direct action against COVID-19. Nobody on the front lines should be constrained by a lack of funds. Hospital intensive-care units must be expanded; temporary hospitals must be built; and respirators, protective gear, and masks must be mass-produced and made available to all who need them. Beyond that, public-health authorities must be given the resources and funds they need to disinfect factories and other public spaces. Hygiene is the order of the day. Large-scale testing of the population is particularly important. The identification of each case can save multiple lives. Surrendering to the pandemic simply is not an option.



SOLICITATION NUMBER: VA-669-20-00004

ISSUANCE DATE: 02/26/2020

CLOSING DATE/TIME: 03/25/2020 (17:30 local time)

SUBJECT: Solicitation for the AID Procurement Agent, Cooperating Country National Personal Service Contract (CCNPS/C).

Dear Prospective Offerors:

The United States Government, represented by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), is seeking offers from qualified persons to provide personal services under contract as described in this solicitation.

Offers must be in accordance with Attachment 1, Sections I through III of this solicitation. Incomplete or unsigned offers will not be considered. Offerors should retain copies of all offer materials for their records.

This solicitation in no way obligates USAID to award a Personal Services Contract, nor does it commit USAID to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of the offers.

Any questions must be directed in writing to the Point of Contact specified in the attached information.

Sincerely,
/s/
Robert W. Appiah
Supervisory Executive Officer

ATTACHMENT 1

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

SOLICITATION NO: VA-669-20-00004

1. **ISSUANCE DATE:** 02/26/2020
2. **CLOSING DATE/TIME FOR RECEIPT OF OFFERS:** 03/25/2020 at 17:30 Monrovia time
3. **POSITION TITLE:** Procurement Agent
4. **MARKET VALUE:** \$24,064.00 to USD \$38,498.00 equivalent to CCN-08 in accordance with AIDAR Appendix J and the Local Compensation Plan of the US Embassy in Monrovia, Liberia. Final compensation will be negotiated within the listed market value.
5. **PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE:** Initial two years with possibility of extension depending on need, performance, and availability of funding. This is considered a permanent position.

Employment under any contract issued under this solicitation is of a continuing nature. Its duration is expected to be part of series of sequential contract; all contract clauses, provisions, and regulatory requirements concerning availability of funds and the specific duration of the contract shall apply.

6. **PLACE OF PERFORMANCE:** Monrovia, Liberia with possible travel as stated in the statement of duties.
7. **SECURITY LEVEL REQUIRED:** Facility and computer access
8. **STATEMENT OF DUTIES**

A. BACKGROUND

USAID and Liberia maintain a long-standing partnership to support economic stability and growth, strengthen democratic governance, and improve health and education systems. USAID/Liberia fosters a spirit of self-reliance and self-sufficiency, building and supporting local systems so there is no longer a need for external support. USAID/Liberia is the first bi-lateral program to have an approved 2019-2024 Country Development Cooperation Strategy; the Mission is in the midst of designing and procuring a significant number of new activities, and the Mission fully embraces the Agency's newly issued Acquisition and Assistance Strategy as well as the Effective Partnering and Procurement Reform Initiative.

B. BASIC FUNCTION OF THE POSITION

This position is in the Office of Acquisition and Assistance (OAA), USAID/Liberia. The incumbent is under the direct supervision of the Supervisory Contracting Officer (SCO) or his/her delegate. H/she performs procurement duties within the Simplified Acquisition Threshold (SAT) for both commodities and services, including international and local consultants; as well as a limited amount of clerical and secretarial duties on behalf of the SCO and the rest of the OAA team.

Serving as the OAA advisor on simplified acquisitions, h/she is responsible for the operational expense and program related procurement activities for OAA (which includes support to other offices in the Mission), and procures a variety of commodities by contract, purchase order, or other available instrument. The position fully complies with all relevant US Government laws, regulations, policies and procedures; liaises with the Financial Management Office (FMO) and the Executive Office (EXO) to ensure the availability and accounting of funds, proper equipment inventory, etc., and monitors how well the contractors and service providers perform towards achieving a contract's purpose.

H/she is principally responsible for planning and coordinating the procurement of goods and services throughout the year, and will be the technical liaison between the contractor(s) and the Contracting Officer; this will include monitoring services and activity implementation, receiving goods and services, and verifying contractor performance.

The incumbent also serves as the principal administrative support person for the Office Director, ensuring that administrative functions are performed effectively, efficiently, and in a manner that promotes harmony and problem-solving, so that other office staff members may be more effective.

The incumbent is expected to work primarily in accomplishing the specific tasks as outlined below. Given the nature of the position, the Procurement Agent will also be expected to respond to any changes in priorities that emerge during the contract period to provide efficient, timely, and effective services to the Mission.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------|
| PROCUREMENT DUTIES | 60% |
|---------------------------|------------|
- A. Performs all OAA local and off-shore procurement actions that are within the Simplified Acquisition Procedure (SAP) threshold for both program and operational expenses (OE) funded requests; from receipt of requests to preparation of purchase order (PO) or contract, and fully close out of the action. Procurement actions may use the full range of procurement instruments available for SAP.
 - B. Provides assistance to support and technical offices on how to prepare appropriate documentation such as statements of work, statement of duties, government estimates (IGCE), evaluation criteria, and single source justifications. Works with Mission personnel to resolve questions related to budgets, classification of terms, reporting/deliverables requirements, market research and developing sources, and special conditions to be included in the solicitation document.
 - C. Develops solicitations and assists the Contracting Officer in screening and reviewing bids and quotations and negotiating contracts. Reviews responses and recommends the best offers based on knowledge of availability, delivery schedules, reliability of suppliers, and cost/price analysis.
 - D. Prepares and reviews final contract language, supplier's bill, and paperwork prior to submission to the Contracting Officer. Writes memorandum of negotiation and justification notes; has the responsibility for planning and organizing work, setting priorities, and making the most efficient use of available resources.
 - E. Conducts periodic informal market surveys to allow reasonable control of prices offered. H/she is knowledgeable of the local and international market and the customs and shipping practices for delivery of commodities. Keeps abreast of market conditions, including price and availability of important commodities and services, and maintains contracts with officials of local supply firms to facilitate resolving procurement problems.
 - F. Prepares contract amendments, negotiates revisions to various contract provisions; writes memoranda of negotiation and prepares other required documentation as needed.
 - G. Monitors contractors' performance to ensure total compliance with the FAR, AIDAR procedures, policies and regulations, and Mission needs.
 - H. Works with the Financial Management Office on financial reviews or audits of implementing partner awards. Analyzes findings and recommends courses of action regarding questioned and ineligible costs to the Contracting Officer.
 - I. Closes out purchase orders, task orders, etc., when deliveries and payments are complete. Maintains a computerized database for generating special, quarterly and annual reports of Mission's procurements. Maintains an updated file of vendors, and all documentation associated with procurements and incoming and outgoing correspondence.
 - J. Maintains contract files and records, prepares reports on closing out purchase orders and contracts which have ended. Maintains an up-to-date filing system (orders, catalogues, magazines), and a contractor/vendor's database.
 - K. Performs contract management support and administrative functions in the review, termination and close-out of government contracts and delivery orders for awards both above and below the simplified acquisition threshold.

ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES	40%
------------------------------	------------

- A. The Agent takes messages in the absence of the supervisor and other staff, directing calls to appropriate staff members, receives and assists visitors, answers questions from the public and/or mission members, ensures that attendees are briefed or provided proper background material for meetings; and arranges for conference room space as required by OAA.
- B. The Agent receives and places phone calls, sends and receives E-mails, and sets up working meetings, workshops, conferences, and makes appointments at the request of the supervisor and other office staff within OAA with the Government of Liberia, donors, implementing partners, non-governmental organizations, private-sector, and other contacts; responds on behalf of the office director as needed, and takes minutes at meetings when requested.
- C. The Agent schedules appointments based on knowledge of the supervisor's commitments, maintains the office calendar, maintains and develops leave plans, weekly travel reports, emergency database and the USAID cascade list for emergency contacts. The incumbent will have expertise in word processing and spreadsheet development in the performance of a variety of assignments such as typing correspondence and other documents in draft and final form, proof-reading for format and consistency with standard Mission and Embassy requirements in advance of the supervisor's signature.
- D. The Agent maintains control of all correspondence for the OAA, is responsible for organizing OAA electronically located project/activity folders ("P" drive and subsequent filing systems), establishing and maintaining computerized tracking systems to track office actions, providing weekly reports to the SCO, drafting non-technical responses to routine correspondence and letters in English, and searching files and records to assemble background information for correspondence and other pending actions. The Agent reviews outgoing mail for proper address, routing, attachments, etc., prior to dispatch, reviewing outgoing correspondence for accuracy and conformance with Mission formatting procedures and special instructions. The Agent distributes internal policies and procedures

- E. The Agent establishes and maintains files according to standards set by USAID/Washington and the Mission Communications and Records Technician/Supervisor in EXO, and according to ADS provisions related to file and records retention. Marks correspondence and other documents for filing, and files accordingly. Reviews all correspondence prepared in OAA or elsewhere in advance of the supervisor's signature, corrects errors by drafters and edits correspondence, and assures that responding correspondence fully meets the requirements posed by incoming correspondence to which it pertains. The Agent maintains and updates documents such as visitors' lists, telephone listings, personnel rosters, vacation schedules, etc.
- F. The Agent may assist, in his absence, the subject matter expert (SME) or principal point of contact for multiple internal procurement related systems; such as GLAAS-the Agency's world-wide web-based acquisition and assistance system that manages awards throughout the procurement life cycle, ASIST-the Agency's official electronic filing system, CPARS-the USG's contractor performance and assessment system, etc. As assistant to the SME, the incumbent will be expected to become familiar with how the systems work, and be designated open/close accounts, troubleshoot issues and solve problems, liaise with USAID/W SMEs, etc.
- G. H/she will make travel arrangements for OAA staff using the Agency's electronic travel system (E2) to prepare travel authorization (TA) requests, submit and track travel approvals by the Regional Security Office when necessary, make hotel and airline reservations through the travel agency and arrange for transportation to and from the airport. The incumbent will prepare travel vouchers after completion of travel. Also, s/he will provide assistance making vehicle requests, apartment and hotel reservations for temporary duty (TDY) arrivals and departures, and ensures welcome kits are ready (if needed) and pre-arrival information is sent to incoming staff. Also, liaises with RSO for security passes, airport passes, emergency contact list, and in-country travel request coordination.
- H. The incumbent is designated as POC for Country Clearance submissions and approvals through the eCC system, as well as File Custodian for OAA, responsible to upload documents and approved eCCs using ASIST. The incumbent is the primary timekeeper for OAA, collecting Time and Attendance (T&A) sheets from all the OAA staff, compiles these sheets and sends a consolidated report to the USAID main timekeeper. S/he will need to become proficient with WebTA, and other systems as needed.
- I. Arranges and submits MyServices requests for office related equipment needs, office and cell phone issues, updates/maintains phone lists, and supports USDH and TCN staff with official residential maintenance requests and needs.

9. POSITION ELEMENTS:

- a. **Supervision Received:**
The Supervisory Contracting Officer or her/his delegate assigns work in terms of objectives and priorities. Assistance is provided on assignments. Employee exercises initiative and judgment in developing and coordinating the procurement actions from beginning up to award, in accordance with standard practices and established procedures.
- b. **Supervision Exercised:**
None.
- c. **Available Guidelines:**
Guidelines include Federal (FAR) and Agency (AIDAR) procurement regulations, USAID Automated Directives System, Mission Orders, and other Agency and Mission policies and procedures as applicable.
- d. **Exercise of Judgment:**
Sound judgment is required to identify problems, provide guidance and make recommendations. A considerable degree of sound judgment is required in the analysis of costs, budgets, financial status and other characteristics of prospective contractors; in deciding what questions need to be asked to project officers and proposed contractors to ensure achievement of the acquisition objectives, purchase request or other instrument.
- e. **Authority to Make Commitments:**
The Procurement agent will participate in discussions and negotiations with potential vendors for related to simplified acquisition procedures. Purchase orders and all obligation documents will be reviewed and signed by the Contracting Officer. The job holder is not authorized to commit or obligate USG funds.
- f. **Nature, Level, and Purpose of Contacts:**
Daily contact with Mission staff, especially with the FMO, office chiefs, and team leaders or other technical team members including COR/AORs; may require occasional contact with Embassy procurement, mailroom services and shipping and customs staff; regular contact to be expected with counterparts, implementing partners and contractors, as well as with GOL officials and private sector business executives as needed.
Contact is maintained with the Financial Management Office and other Mission officials to obtain statements of work/scopes of work, financial data, clarification on terms, conditions and specifications of proposed purchase orders and contracts. Frequent and continuing contact is maintained with present and potential contractors, vendors, and suppliers to clarify terms and conditions of contracts and other procurement documents.
Time Expected to Reach Full Performance Level: One year.

10. AREA OF CONSIDERATION: Open to All Interested CCNs (Cooperating Country Nationals).

AIDAR, Appendix J. 1 (b) Definitions:
(6) "Cooperating country" means the country in which the employing USAID Mission is located.
(7) "Cooperating country national" ("CCN") means an individual who is a cooperating country citizen, or a non-cooperating country citizen lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the cooperating country.

11. PHYSICAL DEMANDS
The work requested does not involve undue physical demands.

12. POINT OF CONTACT:
All application packages are to be submitted:

Procurement Agent
USAID/Liberia, C/O American Embassy Service Entrance,
Gibson Street, Mamba Point, Monrovia
Or by email to: Agatha W. Mangou, Human Resources Assistant, email: amangou@usaid.gov and
Sylvester Browne, Human Resources Specialist, email: sbrowne@usaid.gov

11. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED FOR THIS POSITION

- a. **Education**
Completion of a four year university degree in administrative areas to include but not limited to accounting, business administration, finance, marketing, procurement systems, or a related technical/liberal science (agronomy, computer science, ecology, education, environmental sciences, mathematics, political science, etc.) is required. Specialized training in U.S. Government and USAID acquisition and assistance is desirable.
- b. **Prior Work Experience**
Three to five years of progressively responsible work experience, of which two years could be in procurement, logistics, international development, or related field with other donor organizations, international development organizations, civil society or community-based organizations, private sector, or host-government organizations.
- c. **Language Proficiency**
Level IV (fluent) English skills are required with demonstrated fluency in both written and spoken English.
- d. **Clearances**
The ability to obtain medical and security clearances (Public Trust level –building access) in a timely manner is required.

III. EVALUATION AND SELECTION FACTORS

- A. **Education—20 points**
USAID will assess educational qualifications that increase the candidate's competitiveness for the position.
- B. **Relevant Work Experience – 40 Points**
USAID will assess relevant work experience that increases the candidate's competitiveness for the position.
- C. **Knowledge, Skills and Abilities – 20 Points**
Must possess strong analytical, communication and interpersonal skills. H/she must have strong command of the English language as well as strong computer, writing and speaking skills, including keyboarding/typing skills. Incumbent must possess highly developed organizational and task prioritization/tracking skills.
Demonstrated ability to establish and maintain effective relationships at all levels within the Mission personnel, vendors, contractors, and high-level Embassy Officers. Incumbent must possess the ability to shift priorities as required and excellent customer service skills and be able to respond sympathetically to all staff in a timely and positive manner.
H/she must possess excellent negotiation and persuasive skills. Ability to evaluate the capability of a contractor in terms of adequate productive facilities, current commitments, and financial status is desired. Incumbent must be skilled in determining the responsiveness of price and/or cost proposals, through analysis of cost elements. Must be able to speak authoritatively before USAID's personnel and counterparts to negotiate and represent the U.S. Government's best interests to both U.S. and host country individuals.
- D. **Communication and Computer Skills – 20 Points**
Applicant skills in oral and written communication in the English language, including the ability to obtain, evaluate, and interpret reports, and to effectively communicate organizational mission and policies to staff and partners will be evaluated. USAID will evaluate the applicant's computer skills, including ease and skill in using MS-Office Suite of Applications and Google G Suite applications, and in using the internet to solve problems and conduct research on matters such as regulatory guidance and compliance.

Total possible points = 100

ADDITIONAL SELECTION CRITERIA
Management will consider potential nepotism/conflict of interest, and visa status when determining successful candidacy.

SELECTION PROCESS
After initial screening of applications, only short-listed applicants will be contacted and invited for an interview and a written exercise. Applicants selected for interview will also be evaluated on their reference checks.

- HOW TO APPLY**
Applications shall be submitted no later than the closing date specified, and should include the following:
1. A clearly typed application cover letter that briefly summarizes why you believe you are qualified for this position.
 2. Resume or CV.
 3. The names and contact details of three references that can attest to your procurement management experience.
 4. Documentation (e.g. copies of certificates or degrees) that address the minimum requirements of the position.
 5. One to two-page writing sample broadly related to procurement development in Liberia.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY: The U.S. Mission provides equal opportunity and fair and equitable treatment in employment to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, political affiliation, marital status, or sexual orientation.



REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
MONROVIA



P.O. Box 9041
1000 Monrovia,
10 Liberia
Website: www.moci.gov.lr

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT
Tuesday March 10, 2020
(Commencement of Six-Week Inspection)

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry wishes to inform the Business Community and general public that its quarterly inspection will commence on **Tuesday, March 17 2020 and concluded on Tuesday, May 6, 2020.**

The objective of the six- week inspection is to provide protection for consumers and ensure continuous compliance with standard regulations. The field inspections will only be conducted from **Mondays to Thursdays**, from **(9:00Am - 3:00PM)**, meaning that **Fridays, Holidays and Weekends** are excluded.

The six- week intensive inspection will be guided by the Commerce Ministry's General Inspection Guidelines, with focus on four cardinal areas, including

- English Labeling,
- Business Registration Compliance,
- Adulterated Products
- And Price Tagging of Goods.

The intensive inspection will affect:

- Building/Construction Materials,
- Electronic/Electrical Products,
- Stationery Stores,
- Video Clubs,
- Motels,
- Hotels,
- Bars,
- Mini- Marts,
- Restaurants
- And Foreign Exchange Bureaux.

In the same vein, the Metrology Division at the National Standards Laboratory of the Commerce Ministry will also carry out a routine **Quarterly verification of Gas Stations**, along with **weights and scales** at all establishments, where relevant, including

- supermarkets,
- butcheries,
- And scrap dealers.

The essence of the Gas Stations Verification is to ensure that consumers receive the required quantity of petroleum products and other consumable goods that are purchased from gas stations and other relevant business areas throughout the country.

The **Senior Management Team (SMT)** at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has therefore instructed all inspectors and concerned departments to ensure that the Six-Week Inspection is extended throughout the Republic of Liberia to guarantee good health and safety for the entire citizenry.

It remains no doubt that the Senior Management Team at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry is committed to **creating a vibrant and reliable business atmosphere across Liberia.**

It is therefore important that all those concerned take due note and cooperate so as to avoid embarrassment.

Signed:

Jacob N.B. Parley

Communications Director

Ministry of Commerce and Industry/RL

0777604576/0886560455

Email: jacobtheancestor@yahoo.com/jparley@staffmoci.gov.lr

ARTICLE

Economy terrible for trained Liberian professionals



In the wake of the commitment to encourage Liberians participate in their economy, the government of Liberia remains indebted to a consultant in the amount of over US \$ 33,000 for the three (3) bridges in Grand Cape Mount County. Irrespective of the projects being fully funded by the Japanese Government through its Commodity Value Fund.

It all began in the mid-part of 2014, when a veteran Liberian engineer, Professor John Kpehe Boimah, PE was contracted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs through the county's former superintendent Mohammed Paasewe, to provide consultancy for the construction of the 3 bridges, in ensuring that the projects meet the sound engineering standards and their safety as well.

Following the agreement between both parties, the consultant commenced work at the construction site thereby making major recommendations for changes in the project, which according to the agreement, would have expanded the lifespan of these bridges.

According to documents in our possession, Mr. Boimah who was contracted to provide supervisory consultancy for the projects, began work on the 1st of July 2014 as the contract demanded.

In one of his communications to National Authority complaining of his balance due, Mr. Boimah expressed how committed he was to the contract, highlighting that he acceded the 9 months contracted deadline, which was slated for April 1, 2015.

"Following the end of our contract on the 1st of April 2015, I immediately withdrew my men from the construction site on the 15th, because all efforts to renew the contract failed," he averred in his communication.

Expressing regret over how he has been treated, Mr. Boimah displayed several copies of his monthly report, highlighting one of the contractor's failure to abide by the standardize construction practices.

"Doing the time of the contract, as part of my monthly report, I complained one of the contractors (QUEST) of their refusal to follow my advice, in other for the breach to meet its standard." He asserted in a communication to then Superintendent of Cape Mount Mohammed Paasewe.

Struggling to receive his money, Mr. Boimah wrote several communications to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which was directly address to its current Minister, Varney Sirleaf.

Regardless of his efforts, writing the county legislative caucus, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Public Works as well as past and present superintendents of the county, there has been no response.

According to records in our possession, this is one of the many debts the government is refusing to pay Liberian professionals, including Mr. Boimah who has been a longtime consultant in Liberia.



Pres. Weah's Full Speech on Confirmed COVID-19 in Liberia



March 16, 2020

MY FELLOW CITIZENS AND FOREIGN RESIDENTS:

I would like to speak directly to you today concerning the Coronavirus Pandemic, which is rapidly spreading around the world.

The spread of this virus represents the greatest threat to the health and well-being of the people of Liberia since the Ebola epidemic suffered by our country from 2014 to 2016.

Let me assure you that the Government is taking every precaution and action to protect our borders and ports of entry. However, in spite of these arrangements, I regret to inform you that Liberia has recorded a confirmed case of the COVID-19 virus.

The infected person is Mr. Nathaniel Blama, Executive Director of the Environmental Protection Agency, who arrived in Liberia on Brussels Airlines on Friday night, the 13th of March. Along with several other officials of Government traveling on the same flight, Mr. Blama chose not to be quarantined, in keeping with the health protocols that were in place at the airport.

An intensive tracing exercise is underway to identify and test all persons with whom he came into contact. Meanwhile, all other persons who traveled on that flight and by-passed the mandatory screening protocols, are being made to report to the health authorities immediately and without any further delay, for testing.

Any other persons who attempt to by-pass screening at any port of entry will be arrested and taken into compulsory quarantine.

I want to assure the Liberian people that the situation is under professional management by the health authorities, who have adequately prepared themselves well in advance for this eventuality.

There is no need to panic. I ask that all of you should remain calm, and report any suspicious medical behavior to the authorities for our own safety. It is very important that we all follow the guidelines set out by the health authorities, and adapt our behavior accordingly. MY FELLOW CITIZENS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: In view of the above, it is necessary to take certain immediate actions in response to this threat.

1. There must be a strong focus on hygiene from every individual and organization.

2. Everyone should wash their hands often, several times a day, with soap and running water, and use hand sanitizers, wherever available and affordable. RELATED POSTS Gas Shortage Resurfaces in Liberia Amid Badnews of Covid_19... Mar 16, 2020 Liberia: Health Ministry Confirms First Case of Coronavirus Mar 16, 2020 Liberia Records First Case of Coronavirus; Health... Mar 16, 2020

3. All offices, businesses schools, churches, and places of public gatherings should provide hand-washing facilities at their entrances.

4. There should be NO HANDSHAKING whatsoever. Use a nod of your head for greeting each other.

5. My impending national county tour is hereby postponed due to this new development on the coronavirus situation.

6. All travels to and from all countries with over 200 or more Corona Virus cases are hereby banned

7. All citizens and residents are urged to avoid public gatherings and large crowds, and try to keep a minimum social distance of at least 6 feet from people with fever, cough, sneezing, and difficulty in breathing.

8. Non-essential travel by all officials of government is hereby banned

9. All non-essential employees of the government are hereby granted a paid leave until further notice. The Civil Service Agency will announce the roster of employees in this category

10. Minimize your travel within Liberia, and to and from abroad, to that which is absolutely necessary.

This refers specifically to cross-border traders and travelers coming to Liberia from infected countries, and applies particularly to all Government officials.

As President, I will remain focused at the highest level of leadership and concern, until this threat has been neutralized. However, as Liberia has now moved from the precautionary stage, to a containment stage, we will need your fullest support and cooperation as you change your behavior to follow the simple guidelines and measures that have been recommended above.

We will also be relying on the cooperation and support of our international partners as we work together to eliminate this deadly virus from our country.

Please take note, and govern yourselves accordingly. God bless you all. I thank you.

Français

Les conditions carcérales au Libéria sont terribles

Les conditions de détention dans les prisons Libériennes sont devenues intenable. Les prisons ont désormais l'air de camps de concentration mortels avec un manque criard de nourritures pour les détenus, un surpeuplement excessif, des conditions sanitaires déplorable et un manque de soins médicaux, selon le Département des

États-Unis.

Selon le rapport sur les pratiques en matière de droits de l'homme, la population carcérale dans les 16 établissements du pays est presque le double de sa capacité prévue. Le rapport citait au fait le Bureau des services correctionnels et de réadaptation (BCR) du ministère de la Justice.

Publié le mercredi 11 mars 2020, le rapporta indiqué que le

pays compte environ 2 700 détenus dont un peu moins de la moitié (1 262 détenus) se trouvent à la prison centrale de Monrovia (MCP), qui avait pourtant initialement été construite pour accueillir 374 détenus.

A en croire l'organisation Prison Fellowship of Liberia (PFL) citée par le rapport, en raison de la surpopulation dans le bloc D du MCP, les détenus dorment à tour de rôle. A noter que 74% des détenus ne sont pas encore jugés.

La population carcérale du pays comprenait en décembre 75 femmes et 52 mineurs, a indiqué le rapport puis ajouté que : « La majorité des mineurs étaient en détention provisoire. Les prévenus et les condamnés étaient détenus ensemble. Dans certains cas, les hommes et les femmes étaient détenus ensemble, et les mineurs étaient détenus avec des adultes. »

Les 17 décès enregistrés à la prison centrale de Monrovia ont été attribués à des raisons médicales, y compris l'anémie, les maladies cardiaques et les maladies

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9



1er cas confirmé de COVID-19 en Guinée : "Son état de santé est rassurant" assure l'UE

Alors que la peur s'est emparée de la Guinée, après un premier cas testé positif du Coronavirus, la délégation de l'Union Européenne à Conakry, au sein de laquelle travaille cette patiente d'origine belge, tente de rassurer les populations guinéennes.

Dans un communiqué, la délégation de l'Union Européenne assure que l'état de santé de la patiente « est rassurant et évolue favorablement ».

En plus, ajoute le communiqué, « Aucun autre membre du personnel ne présente actuellement de symptômes et un suivi médical

strict a été mis en place ».

De son côté, révélé l'agence nationale de sécurité sanitaire (ANSS) a révélé que les résultats des analyses sur six (6) contacts de la patiente belge, premier cas confirmé de COVID-19 en Guinée, s'avèrent négatifs.

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9



L'opposition ivoirienne dit « non » au changement de la Constitution à un meeting

Les partis de l'opposition ivoirienne ont tenu dimanche un meeting à Yamoussoukro, dans la capitale politique du pays, pour dire « non » au changement de la Constitution, alors qu'une session du Parlement sur la révision de la loi fondamentale devrait se clôturer mardi. « Nous sommes rassemblés aujourd'hui, principalement, pour dire non à la modification de la Constitution », a déclaré Kakou Guikahué, secrétaire exécutif en chef du Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (Pdci), devant des milliers de partisans réunis à la Place Jean-Paul II.

Il a évoqué un processus de révision constitutionnelle « qui va contre les lois de la Cedeao (Communauté économique des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest) dont la Côte d'Ivoire a signé toutes les chartes ».

Le protocole de la Cedeao relatif à la bonne gouvernance, a-t-il noté, « prescrit en son article 2 qu'aucune modification de la loi électorale ou de la Constitution ne peut se faire sans majorité des acteurs politiques dans les six mois précédant l'élection ».

M. Guikahué a soutenu que le gouvernement ivoirien a cru qu'il avait jusqu'au 31 mars 2020 pour tout changer, faisant une « erreur d'interprétation juridique parce que notre code électoral dit que les listes électorales doivent être publiées trois mois avant le jour du vote ».

En outre, selon le code électoral d'ailleurs en cours de révision, « si on vote le 31 octobre 2020, le 31 juillet on affiche la liste provisoire et on appelle les Ivoiriens au contentieux », ce qui marque le début des élections, a fait savoir le secrétaire exécutif en chef du Pdci.

« Jusqu'au 1er septembre on a le droit d'être candidat, donc le processus électoral commence le 31 juillet 2020 or ils (les dirigeants) confondent les élections avec le vote », a-t-il relevé, avant d'ajouter « le 31 octobre 2020 est le jour du vote, mais les élections commencent le 31 juillet 2020 ».

De ce fait, « le président de la République est forclos (car) s'il voulait renouveler la Constitution, il l'aurait fait au

plus tard le 31 janvier 2020 », a estimé Guikahué, affirmant « nous avons le droit avec nous et nous allons lutter ».

« Pas de changement de la Constitution », a dit Kakou Guikahué, indiquant qu'à partir d'aujourd'hui, est lancée l'« opération debout, en avant ». Il a appelé les partisans de l'opposition à se lever et à ne pas avoir peur, tout en défendant le pays.

Pour les prochaines joutes électorales, l'opposition compte y participer en dépit des réformes exigées qui jusque là n'ont pas eu de retour favorable. Assoa Adou, cadre du Front populaire ivoirien (Fpi), a martelé que l'opposition ne voulait pas d'une modification de la Constitution.

« Dès lundi, envahissez les centres d'enrôlement (car) vous avez le droit d'avoir vos CNI (Cartes nationales d'identité) », a lancé Assoa Adou à l'endroit des militants de l'opposition, appelant toujours à une « gratuité » de ce document.

Odette Lorougnon de l'organisation des femmes du Fpi, a salué le rapprochement du leader du Pdci, Henri Konan Bédié, et l'ex-président ivoirien Laurent Gbagbo, fondateur du Fpi. Toute chose qui augure une réconciliation nationale.

Rejetant le processus de modification de la Constitution en cours, elle a annoncé pour bientôt une mobilisation des femmes en vue d'une grande marche, insinuant que l'heure du rassemblement est arrivée.

Quant au président de Ensemble pour la démocratie et la souveraineté (Eds), Georges Armand Ouégnin, il a laissé entendre que ce mouvement dont le référent politique est Laurent Gbagbo était opposé à un « tripatouillage de la Constitution ».

Il a par ailleurs dénoncé un « système de gouvernance clanique » de l'actuel pouvoir. Plusieurs intervenants issus de la société civile, invités au rassemblement, le deuxième de la plateforme de l'opposition sur les terres d'Houphouët-Boigny, ont également dit non à une modification de la Constitution.

Advertise with us!

Français

Les conditions

infectieuses, probablement exacerbées par des soins inadéquats.

L'accès à la nourriture et aux soins médicaux serait insuffisant pour les détenus, et l'Agence des services généraux, qui n'a pas de responsabilité de surveillance des prisons, aurait fourni deux cargaisons de riz lorsque le ministère de la Justice n'a pas été en mesure de financer la nourriture, selon le Bureau des services correctionnels et de réadaptation, responsable des prisons.

Toujours selon l'Organisation Prison Fellowship of Liberia citée par le rapport, la prison de Kakataa manqué de riz pendant trois semaines. Au cours de cette période, les prisonniers comptaient sur des amis et des proches pour se nourrir, tandis que les responsables de la prison du comté de Bomi auraient acheté du riz avec leur propre argent, car ils n'avaient pas été approvisionnés en août.

«Le MCP ne servait parfois que du riz, il incombait aux prisonniers eux-mêmes d'acheter de l'huile pour compléter leur alimentation. Dans un certain nombre d'endroits, les détenus achetaient de la nourriture au sein de la prison et les plus chanceux étaient nourris par leurs proches qui leur apportaient de la nourriture.»

Selon le rapport, la prison du comté de Lofa a été à mesure de produire du riz, du manioc, du maïs et des haricots. Cela leur a permis de se nourrir. Seulement six prisons sur toute l'étendue du

territoire national disposent de dispensaires. Les autres recevaient la visite des infirmières deux fois par semaines. Mais selon le BCR, ce calendrier est respecté rarement ; certains établissements ne reçoivent pas de visites pendant des semaines.

Le ministère de la Santé et les équipes de santé des comtés sont les principaux responsables de la fourniture des médicaments, mais la chaîne d'approvisionnement est faible dans tout le pays et le personnel médical de la prison n'a souvent pas accès aux médicaments nécessaires.

Le rapport a souligné un traitement inadéquat pour les détenus malades, y compris les détenus handicapés. Les autorités ont décidé de libérer un prisonnier malade. Mais la plupart sont mis en quarantaine quand ils sont malades.

Toutefois, le rapport a fait savoir que les conditions de détentions des femmes sont bien meilleures à celles des hommes. Les cellules des femmes sont moins susceptibles de souffrir de surpeuplement et ont plus de liberté de se déplacer dans la section pour femmes.

Toutefois, le rapport a fait savoir que les conditions de détentions des femmes sont bien meilleures à celles des hommes. Les cellules des femmes sont moins susceptibles de souffrir de surpeuplement et ont plus de liberté de se déplacer dans la section pour femmes.

Le rapport a également cité la Commission nationale indépendante des droits de l'homme comme qu'il y a des besoins d'hygiène personnelle des détenues ne sont souvent pas pris en compte et que de nombreuses détenues manquent d'articles sanitaires. Il arrive que ces articles soient fournis par des proches ou des ONG, mais les stocks s'épuisent rapidement.

1er cas confirmé de COVID-19

Voici le communiqué de la délégation de l'Union Européenne en Guinée :

COMMUNIQUE/CONAKRY, le 13 mars 2019. La Délégation de l'Union européenne en Guinée informe qu'un cas du nouveau coronavirus, le COVID-19, a été détecté parmi son personnel. Suivant rigoureusement le protocole mis en place par les autorités guinéennes, la personne en provenance d'Europe a été confiée à l'Agence nationale de la sécurité sanitaire dès l'apparition des premiers symptômes afin d'être prise

en charge au Centre de traitement épidémiologique de Nongo.

Son état de santé est rassurant et évolue favorablement. Aucun autre membre du personnel ne présente actuellement de symptômes et un suivi médical strict a été mis en place.

La Délégation se conforme strictement aux prescriptions des autorités sanitaires locales et souhaite afficher sa confiance totale dans les équipes de santé ainsi que dans l'administration guinéenne pour la prise en compte et le suivi de cette épidémie.

COMMENTAIRE

Par Arkebe Oqubay

Quand le COVID-19 arrive en Afrique

ADDIS-ABEBA - Le coronavirus COVID-19 - qui s'est désormais propagé à plus de 100 pays - pousse le monde entier vers une « terre inconnue », a déclaré le directeur général de l'Organisation mondiale de la santé, Tedros Adhanom. Si le nombre d'infections est à ce jour peu élevé en Afrique, rien ne permet de penser qu'il n'augmentera pas, auquel cas les conséquences pourraient être catastrophiques.

Il suffit de se remémorer l'épidémie d'Ebola en Afrique de l'Ouest en 2014-2016 pour saisir l'ampleur potentielles des dommages. Les pays les plus durement frappés avaient été la Guinée (avec 3 814 cas et 2 544 décès), le Liberia (10 678 cas et 4 810 décès), et la Sierra Leone (14 124 cas et 3 956 décès). Par ailleurs, la République démocratique du Congo est depuis août 2018 confrontée à son tour à une épidémie d'Ebola de grande ampleur, avec plus de 3 444 cas et 2 264 décès au 10 mars 2020.

Si le virus Ebola présente un taux de mortalité bien supérieur à celui du COVID-19, la rapidité de propagation de ce dernier démontre qu'il pourrait lui aussi très vite échapper à tout contrôle, provoquant de sérieux dégâts économiques et sociaux. Le taux d'infection en Chine n'a par exemple commencé à diminuer qu'après plusieurs semaines d'application de mesures strictes et systématiques, de mobilisation active des communautés, ainsi que de décisions draconiennes de confinement. Et il reste encore à déterminer si le virus est effectivement endigué.

Dans sa préparation face au virus, l'Afrique a débuté sa course. Elle signifie appliquer d'urgence les leçons des récentes épidémies d'Ebola - à commencer par une reconnaissance de la fragilité des systèmes nationaux de santé, vouée à compliquer la situation. Beaucoup en Afrique possèdent trop peu d'argent, d'infrastructures, et d'expertise. Comme l'expliquent les chercheurs Peter Piot et Julia Spencer, ainsi que le médecin libérien Moses J. Soka, « les États doivent renforcer leur capacité à prévenir, détecter et gérer les épidémies, au travers d'investissements considérables au niveau national, et si nécessaire international ».

L'investissement direct dans les infrastructures et services de santé ne constitue pour autant qu'une première étape. La lutte contre l'Ebola a souvent été entravée par le contexte social, notamment les dynamiques propres aux communautés, les croyances locales, l'instabilité politique, les fragilités économiques, ainsi que le manque de confiance dans l'État et les institutions. Une démarche de renforcement des connaissances et de la confiance de l'opinion publique est par conséquent essentielle à l'efficacité de toute stratégie de réponse face au COVID-19.

Les individus doivent par exemple savoir combien les changements de comportements basiques - notamment se laver fréquemment et minutieusement les mains, tousser dans son coude, et éviter les lieux de foule - peuvent faire toute la différence. Ils doivent savoir que les masques médicaux sont peu susceptibles de protéger le grand public, et que la ruée vers ces masques entraîne explosion des prix et pénuries chez les professionnels de santé. Ils doivent enfin savoir que la création d'un vaccin pleinement approuvé nécessitera beaucoup de temps.

Il est par conséquent vital que soit formulé un message cohérent et crédible - coordonné entre les anciens les plus influents au sein des communautés, les chefs religieux, les médias et les responsables publics locaux. Les responsables de la santé doivent par ailleurs partager leurs informations sur la progression du virus, et les mesures d'endiguement du virus être prises dans les temps, en toute transparence.

Mais l'impératif s'étend au-delà de l'information auprès du public. Comme le soulignent Piot, Spencer et Soka, les communautés doivent se montrer « engagées et actives », en tant que partenaires principales des mesures de préparation et de réponse. Cette approche contribuera à la gestion d'une autre priorité : adapter les mesures aux conditions locales, notamment aux normes culturelles, structures communautaires, occupations principales, ainsi qu'à la mobilité, à l'environnement politique, et à

la capacité des systèmes de santé.

Tout ceci exigera des dirigeants qu'ils se montrent décisifs dans leur leadership. Plutôt que de déléguer la question aux ministères de la santé, les chefs de gouvernement africains doivent créer des commissions de haut niveau et des forces d'intervention chargées d'harmoniser le processus décisionnel et la mobilisation des ressources, notamment en facilitant la coordination entre les organes publics. Mon pays, l'Éthiopie, a d'ores et déjà mis en place ce type de task force de haut niveau, ainsi que des installations nationales organisées de diagnostic et de laboratoire, en dépit de l'absence de cas confirmé sur son territoire.

Si elle est bien gérée, la réponse face au COVID-19 aboutira à des systèmes de santé plus solides, beaucoup mieux équipés pour veiller à la santé des populations en périodes normales - ainsi que pour répondre à des crises futures inévitables. Mais pour réussir, les gouvernements africains auront besoin de soutien extérieur.

L'OMS fournit des directives sur la manière de lutter contre le COVID-19. En se coordonnant avec la Commission de l'Union africaine et les organisations régionales, elle sera davantage en mesure de mobiliser des ressources auprès de ses partenaires internationaux.

Les gouvernements les plus expérimentés (notamment le gouvernement chinois) et les agences les plus riches en ressources (telles que les centres américains de prévention et de contrôle des maladies) doivent également apporter conseils et soutien. Par ailleurs, pour un processus décisionnel efficace, les ministres africains de la santé doivent maintenir toutes les agences compétentes pleinement informées de la situation sur le terrain.

La réponse globale face au COVID-19 doit également appréhender les conséquences économiques de la pandémie. D'ores et déjà, les cours du pétrole s'effondrent - une bien mauvaise nouvelle pour les pays producteurs africains. De même, la perturbation des chaînes d'approvisionnement annonce des exportations en déclin. Les dommages subis par le secteur des voyages et du tourisme commencent tout juste à apparaître.

De nombreuses compagnies aériennes africaines ont suspendu leurs vols à destination de la Chine, contre l'avis de l'OMS et de l'Association internationale du transport aérien. D'autres ne l'ont pas fait. Ethiopian Airlines, notamment, plus grand transporteur aérien d'Afrique (et le plus important en nombre de passagers entre la Chine et l'Afrique), a mis en place de nouveaux protocoles d'inspection sanitaire et de procédures préventives, y compris au lieu de départ - un processus qui exige une étroite collaboration avec les autorités chinoises. Les pilotes et personnels de bord ont été formés pour se protéger eux-mêmes ainsi que leurs passagers. La haute direction de la société a créé plusieurs forces d'intervention dont le travail est examiné chaque jour, tandis que son conseil d'administration analyse la situation chaque semaine.

Cette démarche actuelle s'inscrit en phase avec la politique d'Ethiopian Airlines pendant l'épidémie d'Ebola, durant laquelle la compagnie avait déjà décidé de ne pas suspendre ses vols. Mais à mesure de l'évolution de la situation du COVID-19, elle pourrait devoir changer d'approche - pour éviter d'enregistrer des pertes potentiellement considérables. Nombre d'entreprises pourraient être confrontées à des décisions similaires dans les prochaines semaines. Pour sauvegarder leur économie, les gouvernements africains doivent agir immédiatement, en travaillant avec les think tanks et les organisations régionales à l'élaboration de solutions efficaces.

Nul ne sait combien de temps sera nécessaire pour que le COVID-19 soit enfin sous contrôle, ni combien de personnes seront affectées. Les gouvernements africains, en coopération avec les communautés et acteurs internationaux, peuvent néanmoins prendre des mesures dès maintenant pour limiter les dommages - et poser les bases d'un avenir de meilleure santé et de plus grande résilience.

LIBERIA 2019 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

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Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

The constitution stipulates the creation of a claims court, but by year's end one had not been established. There was no specialized court to address lawsuits seeking damages for human rights violations. Individuals or organizations may seek remedies for human rights violations through domestic courts or through administrative mechanisms. Human rights violations are generally reported to the INCHR, which refers cases to relevant ministries, including the Ministry of Justice. In some cases individuals and organizations may appeal adverse domestic decisions to regional human rights bodies after all domestic redress options have been exhausted. While there is an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Court of Justice to address human rights violations in member states, few citizens were aware of it or could afford to access this court. In May the ECOWAS court heard a \$500 million suit brought on behalf of 823 ethnic Mandingoes who alleged they were displaced from their lands in Nimba County during the civil wars. Another hearing was scheduled for March 24, 2020.

f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution prohibits such actions, and the government generally respected these prohibitions.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for the Press

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and press, and the government generally respected these rights, although with some unofficial limits.

Freedom of Expression: Individuals could generally criticize the government publicly or privately, but civil libel and slander laws placed limits on freedom of speech, and self-censorship was widespread. Some media outlets avoided criticizing government officials due to fears of legal sanction and to retain government advertising, which, according to the Press Union of Liberia (PUL),

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was the largest source of media revenue. Other outlets avoided addressing sensitive human rights issues like female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). Court decisions against journalists sometimes involved exorbitant fines.

Press and Media, Including Online Media: Independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views. Some media outlets, journalists, and broadcasters charged fees to publish articles or host radio programs. According to the PUL, civil suits relating to libel, slander, and defamation were sometimes used to curtail freedom of expression and intimidate the press. The PUL also expressed concern media outlets owned directly by politicians and government officials were crowding out privately owned media and advocated for legislation to prohibit ownership of media by public officials.

Violence and Harassment: Law enforcement officers occasionally harassed newspaper and radio station owners because of their political opinions and reporting, especially those that criticized government officials. Government officials also harassed media members for political reasons. For example, in August, Front Page Africa newspaper reported cabinet members were pressuring the Firestone Corporation to fire Patrick Honnah, a public relations manager who criticized the government on social media and through the Punch FM website, where he previously worked. Separately, in July, Judge Peter Gbeneweleh summoned Othello B. Garblah, publisher of New Dawn newspaper, for possible contempt of court because of an article he wrote that speculated there was a plot to exonerate the defendants in the Sable Mining corruption case.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: Although generally able to express a wide variety of views, some journalists practiced self-censorship to avoid harassment. Journalists and media directors also practiced self-censorship to maintain advertising

revenue from the government, the largest advertiser in the country. There were several reports that politicians and government agencies offered "transportation fees" to journalists to secure coverage of events.

From approximately February to August, the radio show of government critic Henry Costa, was frequently unavailable. On at least a few occasions, the broadcast seemed to feature older, progovernment clips, leading to speculation that the station was being jammed or otherwise interfered with. In response Costa made a number of threats of violence in his Facebook Live broadcasts. The government's reactions to these and other broadcasts from Costa, which the government deemed as inciting violence, included a suspension of Roots FM's broadcast license due to nonpayment of fees and inciting violence. On October 10,

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amid groups of protesters supporting Costa, sheriffs from the Monrovia Magisterial Court, escorted by armed police units with a "search and seizure" writ issued by the court at the request of Solicitor General Saymah Cyrenius Cephus, stormed the Roots FM studio, shut Costa's broadcast down, and seized the station's broadcasting equipment.

Libel/Slander Laws: In February criminal libel and slander laws were repealed with the passage of the Kamara Abdullah Kamara Act of Press Freedom. Government officials occasionally used the threat of civil suits to intimidate critics. On April 15, Minister of State for Presidential Affairs Nathaniel McGill filed a \$500,000 defamation suit against Roots FM and its hosts Henry Costa and Fidel Saydee, alleging the two radio personalities "slandered, badmouthed, vandalized and vilified" McGill by accusing him of financial impropriety. He later dropped the suit.

PUL continued efforts to self-regulate the media and ensure adherence to standards including investigation and settlement of complaints against or by the press. PUL's National Media Council, launched in 2017 to address court cases against the media, continued to mediate cases during the year.

Internet Freedom

In the lead-up to and during a planned protest on June 7, the government disrupted access to the internet. Netblocks.org reported widespread social media blockages on both Orange and Lonestar, the two primary mobile networks. When protesters dispersed, access was restored. Cell phone providers announced to customers they had blocked internet access at the instruction of the government. Minister of Information, Cultural Affairs, and Tourism Eugene Nagbe later confirmed the government requested the shut down and invoked unspecified national security concerns for doing so, while also criticizing protest organizers.

There were no additional reports the government censored online content, and there were no reports the government monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority.

There were reports of government officials threatening legal action and filing civil lawsuits to censor protected internet-based speech and intimidate senders.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

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There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The constitution provides for the freedoms of assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights.

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

A variety of civil society groups conducted demonstrations throughout the year, including on the sidewalks outside the legislature and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In a number of cases, the Ministry of Justice requested that organizers of mass protests apply for permits before assembling in areas that would block traffic. The LNBA stated the constitution and law requires prior notification, not application for a permit, to allow the government time to provide sufficient security to protect free assembly, and that a permitting process could restrict freedom of assembly. Many observers said the relevant laws and regulations required clarification.

On April 16, in the run-up to the planned protest on June

7, Deputy Presidential Press Secretary Smith Toby suggested protest organizers would be held liable for the actions of the protesters themselves, saying, "the leaders of the protest will account to Liberians for whatever happens on the contrary."

Government officials encouraged their supporters to respond to the planned protest. On May 6, Deputy Information Minister Eugene Fahngon incited ethnic tensions on his government Facebook account by criticizing the "Congo" (i.e., Americo-Liberian) organizers of the protest and announcing that he would organize a counterprotest of "Country" (i.e., indigenous) persons.

In the lead-up to a mass demonstration planned for December 30 on the main road through the government quarter, the Ministry of Justice denied a permit to the organizers, then suggested January 4 at a nearby stadium as an alternative; protest organizers rejected the suggestion, claiming it would establish a precedent through which the government could set the terms of demonstrations. Civil society and the international community worked to encourage dialogue between all actors and to establish a transparent system that would allow for both free assembly and public safety. The parties ultimately agreed to hold the protest on January 6, 2020.

c. Freedom of Religion

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See the Department of State's International Religious Freedom Report at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

d. Freedom of Movement

The law provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights. Security officials at road checkpoints throughout the country frequently requested bribes, which may have inhibited domestic travel.

e. Internally Displaced Persons

August flooding in the West Point area of Montserrado County affected approximately 4,415 persons, but most internally displaced persons (IDPs) have returned to their homes. Approximately 340 persons were relocated to makeshift shelters outside Monrovia, while the government initiated construction of more permanent houses. The Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) and the National Disaster Commission in the Ministry of Internal Affairs are responsible for responding to natural disasters and supporting affected persons.

f. Protection of Refugees

The law forbids the forced return of refugees, their families, or other persons who may be subjected to persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, and the government generally respected those rights for refugees. The government provides a prima facie mode of recognition for Ivoirian refugees, meaning that Ivoirian refugees arriving in Liberia because of the 2011 postelectoral violence in Cote d'Ivoire do not have to appear before the asylum committee to gain refugee status; the status is granted automatically. According to Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the country was host to 8,623 refugees from Cote d'Ivoire and 77 others of diverse nationalities.

Those denied asylum may submit their case to the appeals committee of the LRRRC. Asylum seekers unsatisfied with the appeals committee ruling can seek judicial review at the Supreme Court. The Alien and Nationality Law of 1974, however, specifically denies many of the safeguards for those wishing to seek asylum in the country under the Refugee Convention.

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Abuse of Migrants, Refugees, and Stateless Persons: The government cooperated with UNHCR, other humanitarian organizations, and donor countries in providing protection and assistance to IDPs, refugees, returning refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

The LRRRC did not record any cases of abuse or discrimination against refugees. UNHCR reported one

Weah bans official travels

By Winston W. Parley

President George Weah has banned all non-essential travels by government officials, and all travels to and from countries reporting over 200 cases of coronavirus, as well as spending his nationwide tour as the country step up efforts to prevent COVID-19 from spreading here.

Mr. Weah has subsequently granted paid leaves to all non-essential government employees and ordered the Civil Service Agency (CSA) to announce the roster of those in this category.

He has also announced that all offices, businesses, schools, churches, and places of public gatherings to provide hand washing facilities at their entrances.

The President's announced these measures Monday March 16, when the country recorded its first confirmed case of the deadly coronavirus which has claimed the life of over 3000 people worldwide with nearly 200,000 infections globally.

The country's first positive coronavirus patient, Dr. Nathaniel Blama, Environmental Protection



Agency (EPA) Executive Director, returned to the country Friday night, 13 March from Switzerland. It is alleged that he "chose not to follow the airport health protocols" instituted in the midst of the covid-19 pandemic.

This allegation prompted Mr. Weah to announce the patient's indefinite suspension as Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Executive Director, while assuring the public that an intensive tracing

is underway to identify and est all persons with whom Mr. Blama came into contact.

Dr. Blama is currently seeking medical attention at the Redemption Hospital on Bushrod Island,

"The spread of this virus represents the greatest threat to the health and well-being of the people of Liberia since the Ebola epidemic suffered by our country from 2014 to 2016," President says.

He said government has and is still taking every

precaution and action to protect the country's borders and ports of entry.

Along with several other officials of government travelling on the same flight, President Weah says Mr. Blama chose not to be quarantined in keeping with the health protocols that were in place at the airport.

Following the President's address, the EPA explains through a social media post which has been trending here, claiming that the president was probably misinformed and it is the EPA's hope that the correct information will be put out there.

"Dr. Nathaniel T. Blama, Sr. went through the regular screening at the RIA along with

other Government officials to be identified," the post says.

The social media post which is released under the authority of EPA Media and Communication Specialist Danise Love Dennis continues that Mr. Blama voluntarily requested additional testing, knowing he was from Switzerland, adding that the test came positive and he went into self-quarantine and later drove himself to a government quarantine center.

"The information given to the President is incorrect. Dr. Blama is law abiding and if he voluntarily not asked for additional testing, no one would have known he's positive," the EPA argues.

It says Mr. Blama informed his entire staff about the result, adding that it is important to note that he drove himself to the treatment center.

The EPA indicates that photos circulated [were] shared by Mr. Blama to tell his staffs that he's positive.

In another post, the EPA explains that Mr. Blama had just returned from Switzerland on a government mission and had asked to be tested fully after the regular screening at RIA.

It says the test confirmed positive, and that he had allegedly quarantined since and was cooperating with health authorities, adding that Mr. Blama never got in contact with any of EPA staff.

Dismiss Blama, close schools -Cummings tells Weah

The political leader of the Alternative National Congress or ANC, former Coca-Cola Executive Mr. Alexander B. Cummings has urged President George Weah to dismiss Environmental Protection Agency Executive Director, Mr. Nathaniel Blama. He also recommends that the Ministry of Education close all schools as Liberia confirm its first coronavirus case.

President Weah has already announced the suspension of Mr. Blama,

following a nationwide address confirming the nation's first coronavirus case here on Monday March 16.

Mr. Blama, was tested and confirmed positive of the virus when he returned to the country on Friday March 13, from Switzerland. It is alleged that he "chose not to follow the airport health protocols" instituted in the midst of the covid-19 pandemic.

But EPA Public Relations Director Denise Love Denise in a Facebook post said authorities lied to President Weah about her boss refusing to follow Lid

down protocols at the airport here.

Mr. Cummings whose party is part of the four collaborating opposition political parties cancelled his tour of Lofa County hours after it was reported that Liberia has confirmed its first coronavirus case.

In a statement issued following government's disclosure that the country has recorded its first case of (COVID 19) in Liberia, Mr. Cummings described the alleged action by Mr. Blama as reckless endangerment of the population.

Cummings explained that strict adherence to safeguarding protocols is not an issue of choice, adding Mr. Blama used his position as head of the EPA to evade and refuse to follow these protocols thus risking the lives of all Liberians and people within our borders.

"We can no longer afford to continue the "Big Man Syndrome" in our country, especially during these critical times. As such, it is imperative that the President immediately relieves Mr. Blama of his position to demonstrate his lack of tolerance for these kinds of behaviors," Mr. Cummings said.

Meanwhile, he thanked President Weah for instituting measures intended to contain

the Coronavirus as health authorities intensify their work.

To this end, Cummings announced that in line with the President's ban on huge gatherings and crowd and the postponement of his nationwide tour, he (Cummings) was also following the Presidents footsteps by announcing the postponement of his Lofa County tour which was scheduled for March 18-

22. "I extend my regrets to the people of Lofa who have done a lot of work in preparing for my visit, and assure them of my visit when all is well. We also call on the Ministry of Education to immediately close all schools in the best interest of our children as schools also constitute large gatherings," Cummings opined. -Writes Othello B. Garblah



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Paraguay appeals court rejects Ronaldinho release bid



An appeals court in Paraguay on Friday rejected a request from lawyers to release Brazilian football great Ronaldinho from pre-trial detention over a fake passport investigation.

The 39-year-old World Cup winner and his brother, Roberto de Assis Moreira, have been held in a police cell since last Friday accused of

entering Paraguay using fake passports.

Lawyers representing the brothers filed an appeal on Thursday, two days after another court rejected their request to release the pair on bail or to house arrest.

"The risk of flight and the risk of obstruction of the investigation, which is the basis of the detention measure against the Assis Moreira

brothers, has not changed," the appeals court judges said in a statement.

Sixteen people have so far been implicated in the fake passport scandal, public prosecutor Federico Delfino said.

The brothers arrived in Asuncion from Brazil last week and showed their passports to immigration police, who did not immediately notice any problem. Hours later, when the passports were determined to be fake, investigators raided the football star's hotel room and seized the brothers' identity cards and travel documents.

Two-time world player of the year, Ronaldinho said the passports had been given to him by people who had invited him to attend conferences sponsored by a charity working with disadvantaged children.

An arrest warrant has been issued against the Paraguayan businesswoman in charge of the charity foundation that invited Ronaldinho.

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Juve defender Rugani 'doing well' after coronavirus diagnosis

Juventus defender Daniele Rugani, the first Italian top-flight footballer diagnosed with coronavirus, said on Monday he was "doing well" and hoped his case "served to sensitise everyone" to the illness.

"I'm fine, I reassure everyone. I've always been quite well, I haven't had any serious symptoms. I consider myself lucky," Rugani told Juventus TV.

The 25-year-old Italian international was diagnosed last Wednesday with the Turin club saying he was asymptomatic.

Since then a total of 11 Serie A players have being diagnosed with the illness which has killed more than 1,800 people in the Mediterranean country.

"There was a huge media explosion right away. A lot of people wrote to me and I thank them," said Rugani, who is currently self-isolating in a



room at the team's J-Hotel, beside the Italian champions' training centre.

"I hope it served to raise awareness, especially those who had not understood the seriousness of this problem.

"I'm going to get over it, we're going to get by and I hope we'll all come out even stronger.

"The quarantine is tough, even more so because you are alone, so I can't wait to embrace all my loved ones."

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