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Min. of State for Presidential Affairs Nathaniel F. McGill

# Referendum not cancelled

## -McGill says

# Motorecyclists go amok

## -after colleague died in accident



A passenger bus set ablaze by rioters

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# Continental News

## The ex-Islamist militant driving a school bus

The Somali militant group al-Shabab recruits thousands of foot soldiers, but also needs people to provide public services in the area it controls. Any caught trying to leave are put to death. At the same time, the government tries to encourage defectors, and runs rehab centres to help them re-enter society.

There are three of them sitting opposite me in the dark room.

Ibrahim is on the left. His gaze is confident, sunglasses tucked into his striped polo shirt, a large watch around his wrist and big brown eyes shining beneath his baseball cap. He says he is 35.

Moulid is in the middle. He is thin and wears yellow flip flops to match his yellow shirt. He is 28 years old.

On the right is Ahmed. He has a neat beard with a keffiyeh scarf wrapped around his head. He is wearing a sky-blue shirt with a sky blue T-shirt underneath. He is 40.

They have a complaint. They do not like the breakfast on offer in this safe place, behind the wire at Mogadishu's international



airport. "It is not our normal food, like pancakes and beans. We do not like bottled water. We like a simple life and simple water," says Ahmed. Unfortunately, the airport caters to international tastes. There is pizza, steak and beer, not Somali fare. I start to tell the three men that I will not use their real names, will not take their photos and will not report on anything that could get them into trouble or that they feel uncomfortable talking about. Ibrahim interrupts me.

"We are not afraid to tell our

stories. Ask us anything you want. You can take our photos and use our real names." However, I decide not to take their photos and not to use their real names because I fear for their lives. This is because they have all defected from the violent Islamist group, al-Shabab, which has been in existence for more than a decade and controls large parts of Somalia, imposing harsh rules and punishments. The group has set up a parallel administration, with

ministries, a police force and a justice system. It runs schools and health centres, irrigates land and repairs roads and bridges, and needs people to carry out this work. The penalty for defecting is death. Al-Shabab has told me this penalty applies to anyone who leaves the group without permission, not just fighters.

"The only reason I joined al-Shabab was money," says Ahmed, the straightest talker of the three. "They paid me from \$200 to \$300 a month. I

was in charge of their transport system in my area."

Ibrahim rubs the fingers of his right hand together in rapid movements to symbolise money.

"I too joined for cash. I was an al-Shabab foot soldier for three years. When you are in it you enjoy it.

"The thing I did not enjoy about being in al-Shabab was the way they tried to alter my mind. Every two weeks they sent a brainwashing team to our battalion which sat with us for hours reciting verses from the Koran and repeating over and over again how the government, the African Union and its other international supporters were infidels and apostates.

"It was as if they inserted al-Shabab sim cards into our brains." The three men say that even though their minds were warped by this indoctrination, they came to realise that the group was not fighting for a purer, better form of Islam, but a twisted, misguided one. It was no longer enough that the militants paid them money. -BBC

## Shoot to kill defended by Uganda minister

Police in Uganda have a right to shoot protesters dead if they "reach a certain level of violence", Security Minister Elly Tumwine has said. Clashes with police sparked by the arrest of presidential candidate and former pop star Bobi Wine have left at

least 28 people dead since Wednesday.

He was later charged with spreading coronavirus at a campaign rally. But human rights groups say the charge is a pretext to suppress opposition ahead of elections due in January. The musician, whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi,

is among 11 candidates challenging President Yoweri Museveni, who has been in power since 1986. The singer was released on bail on Friday after a court appearance. His arrest two days earlier outraged his supporters. Groups of young people set up barricades, burnt tyres and piles of rubbish in the streets of the capital, Kampala, and other towns.

Security forces responded by firing tear gas and live bullets to disperse people.

Pointing to the fact that 11 security personnel had been injured Mr Tumwine told reporters that "police have a right to shoot you and kill you if you reach a certain level of violence". "Can I repeat? Police have a right to shoot you and you die for nothing.... do it at your own risk." In a statement, police said 28 people had died during protests on Wednesday and Thursday, but the AP news agency quotes a police pathologist and the head of

## Malawi sets date for exams re-sit after leak



Malawi's ministry of Education has announced that final year secondary school students will report back to schools on 28 December to prepare to re-sit national examinations.

The government had on 4 November cancelled the examinations after leaked papers were shared social media. President Lazarus Chakwera directed the national examinations board to investigate how the papers leaked and prepare to re-administer the tests not later than January 2021. The board had suggested a re-

administration date of March 2021.

On Sunday, the board announced that fresh tests will be administered in January and the rest of the students will report back to school on 5 January.

Incoming Form One students will report back on 1 February to allow the Form Four students to sit for examinations. Students had staged demonstrations across the country after the government cancelled the tests. The examinations began in October and were due to be completed in mid-November. BBC



Protesters burnt tyres and piles of rubbish in the capital, Kampala, earlier this week

police health services as saying they had counted 37 bodies by Thursday morning. In June Bobi Wine vowed to defy a ban on

campaign rallies during the pandemic. He accused President Museveni of "fearing the people". BBC

# EDITORIAL

## COVID-19 and the senatorial election

**IF THE CURRENT** post-election atmosphere in the United States of America that has seen serious surge in the coronavirus pandemic across several states with daily death toll hitting nearly a million is something to gauge, then Liberians should exercise every caution during this campaign period leading to the actual poll on December 8, 2020 to avoid a resurgence of the virus in the country.

**PARTICULARLY LAST WEEKEND** saw mass gathering of partisans and supporters of the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change here at the Samuel Kanyon Doe Sports Complex in Paynesville City outside Monrovia to officially launch its campaign for the senatorial and representatives' by-elections. Party loyalists draped in predominantly blue and white T-shirts matched by red and blue berets converged from various parts of Monrovia and outside the capital for the launch clustering the stadium to capacity.

**JUST DAYS BEFORE, ON** Wednesday, 18 November Bomi County Disatrick#1 Representative also Independent Senatorial Candidate Edwin Melvin Snowe, who had been campaigning in his county, reportedly tested positive of the virus and immediately went into self-quarantine at his residence though according to him, he had never felt any signs and symptoms.

**REP. SNOWE, A** senior member of the ECOWAS Parliament, was expected to have attended a meeting in Lome, Togo when he went for routine test at the government facility here and was subsequently pronounced positive, effectively banning him from traveling abroad.

**WITH BARELY TWO** weeks before actual voting day on December 8th, the need for all Liberians, particularly partisans and supporters of rival parties and candidates to exercise caution and ensure full compliance of all health measures cannot be over emphasized. We don't want a scenario in which after the poll this country could slip back to compulsory lockdown, as we experienced before.

**AND THIS MAY** likely happen, if care is not taken now, especially as we prepare to celebrate Christmas after the elections that would be characterized by victory euphoria from the poll.

**LIBERIA'S MINISTER OF** Health Doctor Wilhelmina Jallah, addressing a press briefing in Monrovia last week disclosed re-emergence of the virus, particularly in Montserrado County and elsewhere in the country, stressing strict adherence to all health protocols including wearing nose mask, social distancing and regular hands washing, among others.

**ENFORCING THESE REGULATIONS** should not only be left with health authorities along; political party leaders and candidates equally have a responsibility to educate their followers by wearing masks in public and observing social distancing themselves.

**THESE ELECTIONS WILL** come and pass, but how we conduct ourselves as a nation importantly, amid the global pandemic would go a long way in determining our continuous stability health-wise, politically and economically.

**IT IS IMPORTANT THAT** everyone takes cue from Rep. Snowe, who should have been out there campaigning, but is now constrained to self-quarantine for two weeks before being cleared by the Health Ministry to resume normal public activity, pray God that he wouldn't miss the election.

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# COMMENTARY

By George Soros

## Europe Must Stand Up to Hungary and Poland

*The European Union cannot afford to compromise on the rule-of-law provisions it applies to the funds it allocates to member states. How the EU responds to the challenge to those provisions now posed by Hungary and Poland will determine whether it survives as an open society true to the values upon which it was founded.*

**N**EW YORK - Hungary and Poland have vetoed the European Union's proposed €1.15 trillion (\$1.4 trillion) seven-year budget and the €750 billion European recovery fund. Although the two countries are the budget's biggest beneficiaries, their governments are adamantly opposed to the rule-of-law conditionality that the EU has adopted at the behest of the European Parliament. They know that they are violating the rule of law in egregious ways, and do not want to pay the consequences.

It is not so much an abstract concept like the rule of law that Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and, to a lesser extent, Poland's de facto ruler, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, oppose. For them, the rule of law represents a practical limit on personal and political corruption. The veto is a desperate gamble by two serial violators.

It was also an unprecedented step, coming at a moment when Europe is suffering from a dangerous surge of COVID-19 cases, and it threw the other EU countries' representatives into confusion. But when the shock wore off, closer analysis revealed that there is a way around the veto.

The rule-of-law regulations have been adopted. In case there is no agreement on a new budget, the old budget, which expires at the end of 2020, is extended on a yearly basis. Hungary and Poland would not receive any payments under this budget, because their governments are violating the rule of law.

Likewise, the recovery fund, called Next Generation EU, could be implemented by using an enhanced cooperation procedure, as Guy Verhofstadt has proposed. If the EU went down this road, the Orbán-Kaczynski veto could be circumvented. The question is whether the EU, with German Chancellor Angela Merkel perhaps leading the way, can muster the political will.

I am a committed supporter of the EU as a model of an open society built on the rule of law. Being of Hungarian Jewish origin, I am particularly concerned with the situation in Hungary, where I have been active as a philanthropist for more than 30 years.

Orbán has constructed in Hungary an elaborate kleptocratic system to rob the country blind. The amount by which he has enriched his family and friends is difficult to estimate but many of them have become exceedingly wealthy. Orbán is now using the new wave of COVID-19 to amend the Hungarian Constitution and the electoral law (once again) and to entrench himself as prime minister for life by constitutional means. That is a tragedy for the Hungarian people.

Let me give a few examples of how Orbán has robbed the Hungarian people. He has transferred vast sums of public money to a

number of private foundations that he indirectly controls. By a clever constitutional trick, Orbán is now permanently removing these assets from the public domain; it would take a two-thirds majority of Parliament to return them to the Hungarian people. The amounts involved add up to nearly \$2.8 billion.

In a series of fraudulent transactions, companies close to Orbán purchased over 16,000 ventilators on behalf of Hungary for almost \$1 billion, far exceeding the number of intensive care beds and medical personnel that could operate them. An analysis of international trade data shows that Hungary paid the most in the EU for ventilators from China, at one point paying over 50 times more than Germany.

One of these companies also secured an order from Slovenia, whose prime minister, Janez Janša, is a close political ally of Orbán. The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) needs to investigate whether the EU was defrauded. The recent contract for the Russian vaccine that will make Hungary the first European country to use it deserves to be investigated.

At the same time, Orbán is seeking to avoid accountability for these actions, and taking steps to prevent a repeat of the local elections in 2019, when his Fidesz party lost control of the municipal government of Budapest and other major cities. He is going out of his way to deprive Budapest of financial resources, vetoing the city's application to borrow money from the European Investment Bank to buy new mass transportation equipment amenable to social distancing. Budapest is now looking at a \$290 million shortfall in its budget for 2021. Similar conditions prevail in other cities with local governments that are not controlled by Fidesz.

Hungary's opposition parties are bravely trying to challenge Orbán by forming a common list of candidates for the 2022 general election. But their chances of success are limited because Orbán can change the rules at short notice, as he has already done several times before. Conveniently, Orbán is planning to introduce the latest changes to the electoral law while the pandemic is raging, Budapest is under curfew, and soldiers are patrolling the streets.

Moreover, Orbán exercises almost total control over the countryside, where the majority of the population lives. He controls the information they receive, and voting in many villages is not secret. There is practically no way the opposition can prevail.

Only the EU can help. EU funds, for example, should be directed to local authorities, where there is still a functioning democracy in Hungary, unlike at the national level.

The EU can't afford to compromise on the rule-of-law provisions. How it responds to the challenge posed by Orbán and Kaczynski will determine whether it survives as an open society true to the values upon which it was founded.

## A MEMO

## A MEMO

## LMD Fellow: Grand Bassa Joins Call to Postpone December 8 Referendum

Cont'd from last edition

By Sampson David

BUCHANAN, Grand Bassa

**H**e appealed to the citizens to not mix disagreement with a particular referendum proposition with lack awareness on grounds that the special senatorial elections and the referendum are being done simultaneously.

### Possible Explanations

Inquiries made by our reporter at the NEC sub-office in Buchanan indicates that civil society and community-based organizations are not engaged in civic education on the elections at this time. An NEC Buchanan employee, who asked not to be named because they were not authorized to speak, said that NEC could not hire any organization directly to support elections awareness due to lack funding.

However, the NEC has conducted voter awareness. For example, from December 2019 to present, NEC and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) held multiple public engagements and media training on the SSE and the referendum with participants from all over the country. On August 14, the NEC also launched the civic and voter education campaign to enhance voter awareness.

On August 29 the NEC concluded a two-day national conference in Gbarnga, Bong County. It was attended by stakeholders from the 15 counties including superintendents, commissioners, traditional leaders, Civil Society Organizations, faith based organizations, women and youth groups and disabled groups. NEC held several media training activities on elections reporting in Gbarnga, Tubmanburg, Ganta and Buchanan Cities, a five-day legal awareness forum to enhance stakeholders understanding of the legal electoral processes; and the NEC Gender section conducted multiple community outreach programs with Disabled People Organizations (DPOs) and persons with Disabilities in Kakata, Buchanan and Tubmanburg.

Speaking on the COVID-19 safety plan, the commission said: "The NEC is



continuing to collaborate with health authorities to ensure the protection of its staff and others against the coronavirus disease. Accordingly, citizens are advised to observe all COVID-19 prevention protocols, including the washing of hands, wearing of nose masks and social distancing."

As of mid-November, community radio stations have not started playing the SSE and referendum jingles in Buchanan City, although Flomo said two media organizations, including the Liberia Media Development Initiative (LMDI) and One Media were vetted to hire radio stations through an application process to air NEC messages.

### What is at stake

This referendum is to amend three of the 25 propositions gathered from citizens for amendment and it is expected to take place on December 8 alongside the Special Senatorial Election as well as the two by-elections occasioned by the deaths of two Representatives. The propositions include legalizing dual citizenship for natural born Liberians, reduction in tenure of elected government officials and change of election date from the raining season in October to the dry season in November.

The three propositions are represented by separate symbols which were selected by stakeholders and unveiled recently in Buchanan City, Grand Bassa County by the NEC with the symbol of dual citizenship represented by two different colors of passports; reduction in tenure of elected government officials (specifically president, senators and Representatives) is represented by smaller and bigger chairs while change of election date is represented by the rising sun and umbrella.

In this referendum, citizens are required to vote yes or no on each of the three propositions, however, civil society organizations report that voters struggle to understand the importance of the referendum due to lack of sufficient awareness and clarity on why instead of the 25 initial propositions, it's now just three, and why has the tenure for elected officials been reduced by one year each instead of the initial two years.

## OPINION

By Pinelopi Koujianou Goldberg

## What COVID Is Costing Women

*Without a greater focus on the gender dynamics of the COVID-19 crisis, women and girls will suffer long-term handicaps that constrain their economic prospects for years to come, if not permanently. We already know enough about the pandemic's gendered effects to justify implementing far-reaching policy reforms.*

**N**EW HAVEN - Although COVID-19 infections and deaths are surging in many parts of the world, recent announcements of apparently successful vaccine trials have offered a light at the end of the tunnel. One hopes we can soon redirect our attention from the urgent need to save lives to the longer-term costs of the pandemic, not least those being borne disproportionately by women.

The pandemic has compounded a longstanding problem for women around the world: large and persistent barriers to participating in the economy and public life on an equal basis with men. In a recent study drawing on the World Bank Group's Women, Business and the Law database, my co-authors and I show that, despite decades of progress in reducing gender discrimination, there are still large differences in how women and men are treated under the law. On average, women have only three-quarters the legal rights that men have, and they suffer from pronounced disparities regarding pay and accommodations for parenthood.

The picture is even bleaker in some of the world's most populous countries - including India, Pakistan, and China - and in most countries in the Middle East and North Africa. And these findings cover only the discrimination embodied in laws; de facto forms of discrimination in the home and the workplace are presumably more pervasive, even in advanced economies.

Despite medical research documenting lower COVID-19 mortality for women, many observers have warned that the pandemic is hitting women harder in many other ways. In addition to the obvious risks the virus poses to health-care workers, who are disproportionately female, the attendant lockdown measures have led to lapses in maternity care and an increase in domestic abuse.

The COVID-19 crisis has also had disproportionate economic effects on women. During past economic contractions, employment losses were typically higher for men, because recessions primarily affected sectors that employed more men than women, such as manufacturing and construction. The pandemic, however, has primarily hit service sectors like hospitality and restaurants, where women account for a larger share of employment. Recent estimates based on data from the United States and India indicate that the female job-loss rates due to COVID-19 have been about 1.8 times higher than male job-loss rates.

There is a large body of literature in economics showing that job losses during downturns have long-lasting effects, because the unemployed tend to lose relevant job skills and professional connections over time. These negative effects are now threatening to diminish women's economic opportunities well into the future.

Worse, scholarly estimates likely understate the true economic impact that the pandemic will have on working women in low-income countries, most of whom are employed in the informal sector (which, by definition, is not adequately captured in official data or surveys). For the overwhelming majority of informal workers, remote work is not an option during lockdowns, and relief efforts that operate through formal employment channels are of little or no help. Moreover, public policies like cash transfers require reliable identification and access to digital services; but across low-income countries, an estimated 45% of women over the age of 15 lack identification, compared to just 30% of men.

School closures have also had more severe consequences for women and girls. Even if relatively short in duration, closures in low-income settings can result in long-run losses of human capital among girls. Earlier research based on the 2014 Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone found an increase in out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and showed that when schools reopened, boys returned to classes, but many girls did not.

Equally pervasive is the effect of lockdowns and closures on childcare. With nannies, babysitters, neighbors, friends, and grandparents off limits, many families have had to watch and homeschool their children themselves. And given traditional gender roles in the home, the burden of this additional work has fallen disproportionately on women. Not surprisingly, many women, faced with these double duties, drop out of the labor market altogether. In the US, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics reveal that four times more women than men left the labor force in September 2020.

To address these disparities, we first need to bring gender issues to the forefront in policy debates, media coverage, and academic research. The gender dimension of the pandemic has received far less attention than its racial and socioeconomic aspects. Whenever we do shift our focus to the post-pandemic recovery, we must use that occasion to enact changes that will improve women's lives.

Adopting and promoting flexible work schedules is one top priority. A substantial body of research documents that women's pay and career prospects start to diverge significantly from those of men once they have children. More flexible work hours would allow women to continue their careers without having to forsake family time. The surge in remote work during the pandemic has shown what is possible with today's technologies, and the challenges faced by many parents during lockdowns have underscored how important basic childcare is for the broader economy.

One silver lining of the pandemic is that it may lead to a real change in attitudes toward housework, parenting, and care for children. Universal, free, high-quality childcare would allow all mothers to focus on their careers, whether or not they are working from home. It could also generate more fulfilling employment in jobs that would not be threatened by robots or offshoring.

But we will need to remain vigilant and ensure that important reforms and policies to promote gender equality are not postponed or reversed as other priorities seize policymakers' attention. In low-income countries, we must follow through on giving all girls a chance to return to class once schools reopen.

All of the measures can be realized at reasonable cost. But effecting real change will require a gender perspective on the pandemic that has so far been lacking.

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# SPECIAL

# ARTICLE

## Stop Praising Men. Support Women – a message to women voters

By: Joseph Titus Yekeryan  
(LMD Fellow: 0888977243/0778787479)

In the quest to providing opportunities for women in the governance system of Liberia, the Women’s NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL), has concluded a one-day round table discussion with heads of several women organizations in Gbarnga, Bong County, on the upcoming Special Senatorial Elections (SSE) in Liberia. The discussion focused on supporting



Officials of WONGOSOL and participants of the Discussion (group photo credit: Joseph Titus Yekeryan)

women in politics and increasing their chances to be in elected government office and participate in governance. It also encourages networking and support for community women to prevent pre and post-election violence against women.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. At its heart are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries in a global partnership. SDG 5 seeks to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls and promotes full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.

However, looking at the National Elections Commission’s final list of candidates for the Special Senatorial Elections (SSE), on 20 out of the 118 candidates are women. This means that the goal is not at all supported in Liberia. The twenty women will contest in 12 of the 15 counties in Liberia. The by-elections for the House of Representatives only has 2 women candidates out of the total of 14. That means that just 16.6% of all candidates for the Legislative are women.

By comparison, according to the UN, at the global level, 25% of all legislators in the world are women. Liberia trails far behind.

In the world, only 25% of all legislators are women. That means one woman-legislator for every 4 men. Source: UN

Despite the low presence of women on the final



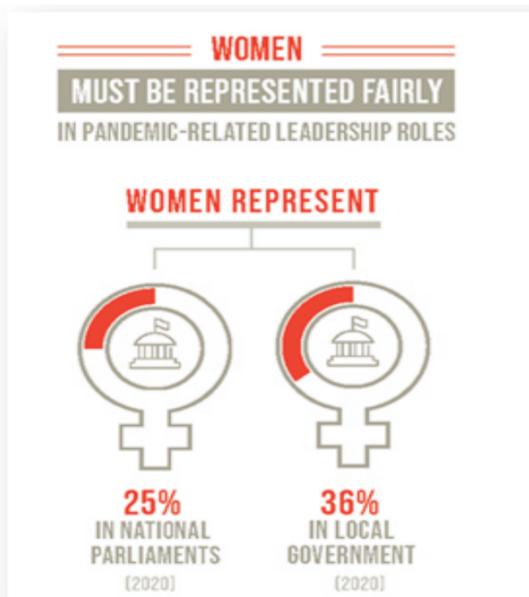
Sam McGill, Regional Coordinator for the Independent National Commission on Human Rights. Photo credit: Joseph Titus Yekeryan.

elections lists, the WONGOSOL believes that it can make a big effort to help the female contestants to get elected, referencing the just ended round table discussion as a factor that will contribute to women’s success.

With support from the Government of Sweden, the forums will continue across the country under the theme “The Impact and Importance of Women’s Political Participants”. Speaking during at the roundtable, Sam McGill the Regional Human Rights Coordinator for the Independent National Commission on Human Rights, stressed the need for women political participation- adding that women play significant roles in the fight for good governance and nation building.

Mr. McGill said women’s political participation is a fundamental prerequisite for gender equality and genuine democracy on grounds that it facilitates women’s direct engagement in public decision-making and a means of ensuring better accountability.

McGill told the women audience that their participation results represent tangible gains for democracy, including greater responsiveness to citizen



needs, increased cooperation across parties and ethnic lines as well as sustainable future.

“As women, you need to double up your efforts to support your colleagues, women are kindhearted, and they make things happen. They, too, need to be given a voice and the power to serve at the Liberian’s Legislature” he added. According to him, the paradigm of Liberia’s development will be changed for the better when women are given the opportunity to serve in key positions in the governance system of the country.

Lena T. Cummings, WONGOSOL Advisor, said that women need to be supported at all levels in national and local election.

Ms. Cummings said that, as survivors of conflict and violence, women have the experience to end persistent disputes as guardians of their social community and with that, the chance must be given to them, to have them elected to power in the elections scheduled for December 8.

She said that women participation in politics and governance also promotes agricultural productivity, enterprise development and, above all, it enhances business management. “Women also play key roles in creating peaceful and stable societies which bring economic growth and development. We want to encourage you to support women whether [you are a] man or [a] woman, you need to support women in this



Seven in ten women worldwide serve as health and social workers, caring for the human beings Source: UN

election if the country should move forward,” Ms. Cummings added.

After the discussion, the participants, especially rural women, pledged their commitment to WONGOSOL to do everything in their power to support female candidates in the December 8 elections.

Amanda S. Kollie, Rural Women representative, told journalists that she will encourage her colleagues to campaign for the elections of women to parliament in this December elections, and not just in Bong county, but across Liberia. “We, the women, we have the power to do whatever, so why can’t we support our fellow women to power? We need to stop singing songs behind male contestants and help push our fellow women to power” she said.

She pointed out that statistically, when at least 30% of the legislative positions in a country are occupied by women, the corruption is reduced, stating that the majority of women do not have



Amanda S. Kollie, Rural Women Representative. Photo credit: Joseph Titus Yekeryan

time for corruption, nepotism or cronyism.

In Bong County (where the discus was held, there are eight Candidates contesting the election with only one female contestant.

Women gained voting rights in Liberia following a constitutional referendum on May 7, 1946. The change in the constitution was approved in the Legislature in December 1945 and would grant women the right to vote. It was approved by voters and came into force on 10 December 1946.

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**MORE HEADLINE NEWS**

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**PUL condemns alleged intimidation**

The Press Union of Liberia has condemned the alleged intimidation of the Publisher of the Independent Probe Newspaper Chester A. Smith allegedly by the

Deputy Minister Eugene Fargohn intimidation followed an article carried on the Independent Probe Newspaper, November 16, 2020, official website under the captioned "Over Mobutu Nyenpan's Death:

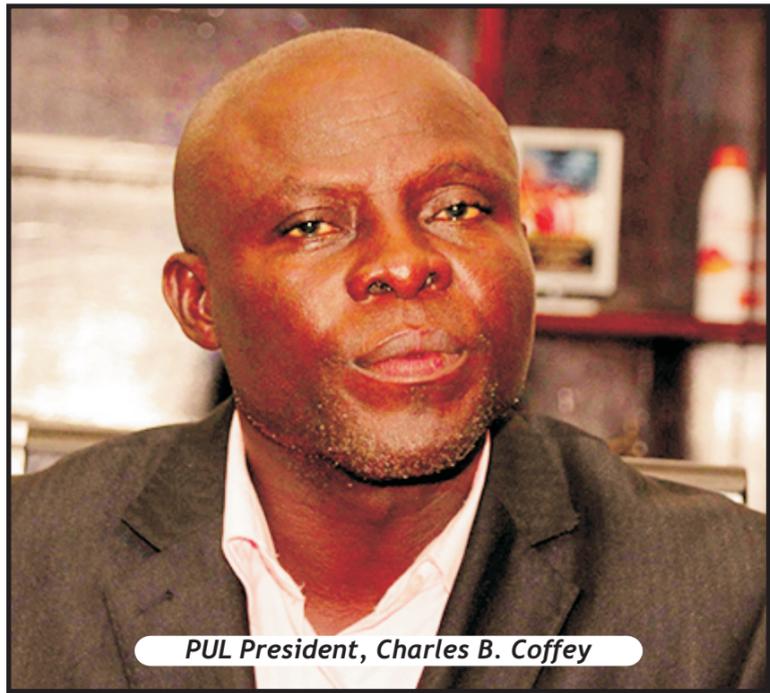
Ministers viciously demanded him to rewrite the headline carried as it was misquoting Minister Nathaniel McGill and accused Mr. Chester A. Smith, Publisher, Independent probe newspaper, of undermining the government of Liberia, and being paid by opposition.

The Press Union Liberia has however launched an independent investigation into the intimidation against Chester Smith and other Journalists in recent times.

The PUL is therefore warning the two government officials against implementing their intimidation tactics and vowed to take serious action if anything happen to the Liberian Journalist.

The Union believes that the wave of threats, intimidation and Attacks against Journalists by Agents of the Government has reach a disproportionate level and the media is planning stronger action in response to these acts.

The Press Union of Liberia is again calling on the Liberia National Police to protection for all Liberian Journalists including Chester Smith.



PUL President, Charles B. Coffey

Minister of State for Presidential Affairs and Deputy Information Minister for Public Affairs.

Journalist Smith in a letter to the PUL explained that Minister Nathaniel Mcgail and

Minister Nathaniel McGill Opens Cane of Worms; Says He died Allegedly from food eaten from Paris Restaurant, But Owner vows law suit."

Journalist Smith told the PUL in his complaint that Both

**GoL signs agreement with TRACOM Liberia, Ltd.**

The Government of Liberia has signed a Framework Agreement for the development, instillation and operations of an Electronic Fiscal Device System (EFDS) in Liberia.

Government, represented by members of the Inter Ministerial Concession Committee (IMCC) namely, the Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA), National Investment Commission (NIC), Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI) and Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) signed the agreement

capacity to deliver on the project and impressive technical expertise.

The group, under the agreement, is expected to invest up to US\$12.7 Million over the period of seven years.

The fiscal device system will compile sales data of supermarkets, stores, hotels and restaurants among others aimed at promoting accountability and transparency in the filing and payment of various taxes to include Corporate Income Tax (CIT) and Goods and Services Tax (GST) and boost revenue collection.



LRA CG Thomas Doe Nah and TRACOM's Managing Director Paul Njau exchanging copies of the agreement

recently.

According to the Liberia Revenue Authority, the electronic system will enable the Government to install electronic fiscal devices to track daily transactions and sales records of businesses in Liberia.

The project was initiated in 2018 by the Ministry of Commerce as the Concession Entity followed by an International Competitive Bidding (ICB) process with TRACOM emerging as the most responsive bidder demonstrating a strong track record, sufficient financial

The system will also change the way the Government of Liberia does business, ensure justice within the tax administration and professionalism amongst public and private sector actors and create thousands of direct and indirect jobs especially for local IT firms to carryout on-site and off-site maintenance services for twenty thousand electronic fiscal devices to be deployed at various businesses across the country.

Speaking during the signing of the agreement at the

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 11

**Weah declares 16 days of activism against Gender Based Violence**

President George Weah has by Proclamation declared Wednesday, November 25 through Thursday, December 10, 2020, the Sixteen (16) Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence to be observed throughout the Republic as a Working Holidays.

The Proclamation calls on Government Ministries and Agencies, Local and International Organizations, the Children's Parliament, the United Nations System and the General Public to join the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection in collaboration with the Gender Based Violence Taskforce, Women Organizations and Men's Groups to plan and implement appropriate programs befitting the occasion.

A Foreign Ministry release says the 16 Days Of Activism Against Gender Based Violence is a Global Champaign dedicated to end Gender-Based Violence and



President George M. Weah

highlight other significant dates such as: November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women; November 29, International Women Human Rights Defenders Day; December 1, World AIDS Day; December 3, International Day of Disabled Persons; December 6, Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre and December 10, International Human Rights

Day.

According to the Proclamation, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection being cognizant of the dates of "International Day of Violence Against Women," "International Human Rights Day", "International Human Rights Defenders Day", "World AIDS Day", "International Day of

Disabled Persons", and "the Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre", has agreed to jointly observe the above occasions through specially planned programs to further raised and strengthen the concepts of being expressed for public consumption and participation.

The Proclamation further mentions that the 2020 campaign will be celebrated

under the global theme: "End GBV and Harassment in the World of Work" and the National theme: "Take Action to End GBV and Harassment in Liberia".

The Proclamation says the Inter-Ministerial Task Force on SGBV set up by President George Manneh Weah submitted a document entitled: "Government of

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# MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS

## MPC's candidate backs out of River Cess Senate Race to support Tequah

By Trokon Freeman  
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Candidate Steve Tequah in the middle flanked by Strother on the right

The senatorial bid of Candidate Steve Tequah has received a huge boost ahead of December 8 elections, as one of those qualified by the National Elections Commission (NEC) to contest

of River Cess. 'Blojay' also endorsed the candidature of Candidate Tequah during the weekend.

Mr. Strother, who got the nomination of the Movement for Progressive Change (MPC) of Mr. Simeon Freeman to contest the senatorial election in River Cess, told a huge gathering in River Cess' Boe Town at an endorsement ceremony that his political manifesto is similar to that of Mr. Tequah. According to

election in our county".

"Steve and I share the same ideology. We're thinking the same way. There is no need to fight over this thing".

Strother then called on his supporters to divert their votes to Steve Tequah. He vowed to reach out to towns and villages in River Cess to ensure that Steve is elected in the impending elections.

"To demonstrate my support to you Mr. Steve Tequah, I'm telling all of my supporters to go out and campaign for you. Even though my face will be on the ballot paper, but don't be confused. I'm no more in the race". The vote you've been keeping for me, please drop it in the box for Steve".

Responding to the endorsement, Steve Tequah lauded Eddie Strother and officials and members of 'Blojay' for the decision promising to deliver up to expectation if elected to the Liberian Senate.

"Thank you plenty for this big endorsement. Thanks to 'Blojay' and Mr. Strother for this great decision. I will do my best to push your interest. I will not let you down".

Tequah said he's worried about the health and education needs of the people, and as such he would do everything to change the story if elected.

River Cess is the only county in Liberia that has one semi-functional high school, situated in the administrative

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the senate seat for River Cess, Eddie J. Strother, during the weekend announced he was withdrawing from the race to support the independent candidate.

Mr. Strother is the chairman of 'Blojay', a mass based grass root organization that is deeply rooted in the eight administrative districts

him, the independent candidate is the best candidate in the race, adding Steve has good intentions for county and country.

"Following consultations with my family and supporters, I have come to let you know that I have withdrawn from the race to support my young brother Steve Tequah in the upcoming

## NEC ends ToT for political parties agents

The Political Affairs Section of the National Elections Commission, (NEC) has ended a two-day Political Party Poll-Watching training of trainers, TOT workshop for nearly 100 Party Agents of Political Parties and Independent Candidates, with the acknowledgement that the United Nations has spent nearly 8 billion dollars on the attainment and maintenance of peace in Liberia.

The two-day party agents TOT workshop conducted in Ganta, Nimba County in collaboration with the Peace Building Office in Liberia, with funding from the United Nations Development Program, UNDP and the National Democratic

Institute, NDI, funded by the United States Agency for International Development, USAID.

Marking the pronouncement on Saturday, 21 November 2020 the head of the Peace Building Office in Liberia Edward Mulbah said this was why the peace building office attaches great importance to conducting regular free, fair and transparent election in Liberia to sustain the current peace we now enjoy.

Mr. Mulbah said the UN no more has such a money to spend on Liberia and as such it is incumbent upon all Liberians, civil society groups, the religious community and political parties to do all within their power to ensure that the peace is maintained through a

violent-free election come 8 December 2020.

Performing the official opening ceremony of the party agents TOT, Commissioner with Oversight responsibility for Political Affairs, Boakai A. Dukuly challenged the participants to always serve as ambassadors for peace, in actions against violent elections come on December 2020.

For his part, the UNDP Consultant Mack Anthony said the international body will continue to support Liberia to maintain peace through free, fair and transparent elections in Liberia, in his words, Liberia is the only country we have and we most therefore do all to keep it peaceful before, during and even after

## LMC conducts editors' forum

As part of its many efforts aimed at enhancing the capacity of Liberian journalists to diversify their reportage in the forest sector, the Liberia Media Center (LMC) with support from the Multi-stakeholders Forestry Governance Project (MFGAP) has concluded a one-day trainer of trainers' training with editors.

The training, which brought together editors and senior reporters from various media outlets, including the print, electronic and online media, was held at the Crown Hotel in Paynesville, outside Monrovia.

doing in the forest sector. This is to improve and increase media coverage in the forest sector; we have conducted series of trainings in different thematic areas, including the Freedom of Information Act, investigative reporting and this time, we are having this editors' training," stated the LMC Program Officer.

"This is geared to enabling editors to have the leverage of what has been ongoing in the sector. This is meant for us to brainstorm on issues bordering the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) and other issues regarding the forest sector," he stated.



The Program Officer at the LMC and lead facilitator, Mr. Francis Brewer, stressed the importance of role of the media in society and urged Liberian journalists to diversify their reportage to other thematic areas such as the forest sector.

According to Mr. Brewer, the training was aimed at bringing media managers up to speed so that they are abreast about issues within the forest sector to improve and increase coverage on the area.

"The intention of this training is to bring media managers up to speed so that they are aware of what we are

In remarks, Officer-In-Charge of the LMC, Victor A. Menyau, said the one-day training was geared at capacitating editors to learn more about the forest sector.

"There is need that we cover the forest sector effectively and efficiently. It is through the media that the society voice will be amplified and it is through the media that the concessionaires will be able to live up to their responsibilities. There is a serious need for media to be in this program," added Menyau, who is also the Director of Program at the LMC. -Editing by Jonathan Browne

the 8 December 2020 Special Senatorial Elections, Constitutional Referendum and two representative By-elections in Montserrado and Sinoe counties.

In a related development, the Gender Section of the National Elections Commission, with funds from

the United Nations Development Program, UNDP over the weekend concluded a two-day workshop in Ganta City, Nimba County for 34 members of the Disabled Community on how to use the Tactile Ballot to be used in the 8 December 2020 elections.

# Français

## Sénatoriales 2020 : Démonstration de force de la coalition au pouvoir à Montserrado

Les militants et sympathisants de la Coalition pour le changement démocratique, la coalition au pouvoir, ont convergé au complexe sportif Samuel Kanyon Doe à Paynesville samedi 21 novembre pour le lancement officiel de la campagne des candidats en lice aux élections sénatoriales prévues pour le 8 décembre.

Scandant les slogans de la majorité au pouvoir, les militants, arrivés de partout dans la capitale et à l'intérieur du pays, ont pris d'assaut les rues principales, vêtus de T-shirts bleus et blancs. Une grande marche a eu lieu sur la route principale du centre de Monrovia jusqu'au stade de Paynesville, obstruant délibérément la circulation, forçant les véhicules de transport public et les véhicules privés de rester cloîtrés pendant des heures dans un énorme embouteillage.

Le président George Manneh Weah, porte-étendard de la Coalition tripartite qui comprend le Congrès pour le changement démocratique, le Parti patriotique national et le

Parti démocratique du peuple libérien, a demandé à ses militants de reprendre le contrôle du comté de Montserrado qui, autrefois, était son bastion, mais aujourd'hui est sous le contrôle du sénateur Dillon.

Le Congrès pour le changement démocratique (CDC), depuis sa création en 2004, a raflé des victoires à Montserrado jusqu'à ce qu'en 2017 il perde de façon honteuse face à l'opposition. Le parti ne s'est pas encore remis

de cette défaite.

S'exprimant lors du meeting, le candidat Thomas Fallah pour le compte du CDC dans le comté de Montserrado a salué la bravoure des militants pour leur soutien, en particulier, le porte-étendard, le président George Manneh Weah, pour lui avoir donné l'occasion de se présenter aux élections sénatoriales sur le ticket du Congrès pour le changement démocratique en 2005.

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CPP senatorial candidate Giko receives certificate

## Air France reprend ses vols dans le ciel du Libéria

Le gouvernement du Libéria a salué la reprise des vols de Air France vers Monrovia, un événement qui marque la fin d'une longue interruption depuis des années.

Le président George Manneh Weah a exprimé la reconnaissance et la joie du gouvernement libérien vendredi, lorsque les cadres

supérieurs d'Air France pour l'Afrique lui ont rendu une visite de courtoisie. Le dirigeant libérien a déclaré qu'avec ses liens étroits avec la France, les relations bilatérales entre les deux pays ne feront que s'améliorer. «La France a beaucoup fait pour moi et avec le fait qu'Air France s'engage d'être ici dans un avenir

prévisible, pour nous c'est beaucoup de bonté de la part du peuple français », a déclaré le président Weah.

De son côté, le vice-président principal d'Air France, Henri Hourcade, a salué les efforts et l'engagement du gouvernement libérien pour amener la compagnie aérienne à reprendre ses opérations dans le pays. «C'est en raison de l'engagement très fort du Libéria cette fois-ci autour de la création des bonnes conditions que nous sommes de retour ici pour reprendre les opérations avec un effectif complet», a affirmé Henri Hourcade.

Plus tôt dans la journée, lors d'une cérémonie officielle destinée à commémorer l'arrivée du vol inaugural, le ministre libérien des Finances et de la Planification du développement, Samuel D. Tweah a déclaré que la reprise des activités de la compagnie

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## Éditorial

### La COVID-19 et l'élection sénatoriale

Les Libériens devraient faire preuve de prudence totale pendant cette période électorale pour éviter une résurgence du Coronavirus dans le pays. Il faut tirer les leçons de l'atmosphère post-électorale actuelle aux États-Unis d'Amérique, qui est marquée par une forte augmentation des cas de la COVID-19 dans plusieurs États.

Le week-end dernier, les militants de la Coalition pour le changement démocratique, la coalition au pouvoir, se sont rassemblés au complexe sportif Samuel Kanyon Doe de Paynesville, dans la banlieue de Monrovia, dans le cadre du lancement officiel de sa campagne pour les élections sénatoriales. Vêtus de T-shirts bleus et blancs assortis de bérets rouges et bleus, les militants sont arrivés de partout dans la capitale et de l'intérieur du pays pour se regrouper au stade.

Quelques jours auparavant, notamment le mercredi 18 novembre, le représentant Edwin Melvin Snowedu district n° 1 du comté de Bomi, qui est également candidat aux élections sénatoriales, aurait été testé positif au virus et serait immédiatement entré en quarantaine à sa résidence, quoique, selon lui, il n'eût pas ressenti le moindre symptôme.

Le représentant Snowe, un membre éminent du Parlement de la CEDEAO, devrait prendre part à une réunion à Lomé, au Togo, et lorsqu'il est allé se faire tester comme cela est de routine, il a été déclaré positif, ce qui l'a empêché de voyager à l'étranger.

Nous sommes à peine à deux semaines du jour du scrutin qui prévu le 8 décembre. Il est important que les Libériens, dont notamment les militants des candidats en lice, fassent preuve de prudence et se conforment à toutes les mesures sanitaires dont la distanciation sociale. Nous ne voulons pas d'un scénario où après le scrutin, ce pays se voit obligé de procéder à un verrouillage, comme nous l'avons vécu auparavant.

Et si l'on n'y prend pas garde dès maintenant, cela pourrait probablement arriver, d'autant plus que nous nous préparons à célébrer Noël après les élections sur fond d'euphorie pour des victoires de certains prétendants.

La ministre libérienne de la Santé, docteur Wilhelmina Jallah, lors d'un point de presse à Monrovia la semaine dernière, a fait état d'une réémergence du virus, en particulier dans le comté de Montserrado et ailleurs dans le pays, soulignant le strict respect de toutes les mesures barrières, y compris le port de masque nasal, la distanciation sociale et le lavage régulier des mains, entre autres.

L'application de ces réglementations n'est pas réservée uniquement aux autorités sanitaires. Les leaders des partis politiques et les candidats ont également la responsabilité de sensibiliser leurs militants en portant des masques en public et en observant leurs distances sociales.

Ces élections viendront et passeront, mais la manière dont nous nous comportons en tant que nation, ce qui est important, au milieu de la pandémie mondiale, ira loin dans la détermination de notre stabilité continue sur le plan sanitaire, politique et économique.

Il est important que tout le monde s'inspire du représentant Snowe, qui aurait dû faire campagne, mais qui est maintenant contraint de se mettre en quarantaine pendant deux semaines avant d'être autorisé par le ministère de la Santé à reprendre ses activités publiques normales, prions Dieu qu'il en soit ainsi.

# Français

## Sénatoriales 2020 :

«Je présente ma sincère gratitude à Son Excellence le Président George MannehWeah pour m'avoir donné (moi un vendeur de planches), l'opportunité de me présenter en 2005. Depuis lors, j'ai servi mon parti de tout mon être et aujourd'hui ce vendeur de planches a trouvé une place au CDC et chez les habitants du district n° 5, dont je suis le représentant.

«Monsieur le porte-drapeau, merci pour cette opportunité. Certainement

avec l'appui ici aujourd'hui de nos partisans qui sont venus, qui ont abandonné leurs œuvres et autres problèmes familiaux, vous pouvez être rassuré, Monsieur le Porte-drapeau, Monsieur le Président, que tous les militants du CDC, quelle que soit leur réserve, ont accepté de reconquérir le comté de Montserrado. C'est promis Monsieur le Président, nous nous engageons à le faire le 8 décembre 2020», a dit Fallah devant une foule de supporters en liesse.

## Air France reprend ses

aérienne dans le pays reflétait sa confiance dans l'avenir économique du Libéria. Il a déclaré qu'en dépit de la crise de la Covid-19, beaucoup de choses ont été accomplies et que le climat des affaires continuera de s'améliorer.

Il y avait également à cette cérémonie le ministre de l'Information Ledgerhood J. Rennie, le vice-ministre des Transports Sirleaf Tyler et le nouvel ambassadeur de France Michael Roux - qui a vanté les liens entre le Libéria et la France. L'ambassadeur Roux a déclaré que le gouvernement français faisait confiance aux perspectives de l'économie libérienne, malgré la Covid-19 et le mal qu'il a fait aux entreprises.

On peut rappeler que lors

d'une visite d'État en France en 2019, le président George M. Weah a plaidé auprès des responsables français et de la direction de la compagnie aérienne pour la reprise de leur liaison de Monrovia. Leurs opérations dans le pays, qui ont été interrompues en 2014, devaient initialement redémarrer en avril 2020, mais elles ont été retardées en raison de la pandémie de la Covid-19.

Air France s'ajoutera à une liste croissante de transporteurs internationaux que le gouvernement courtise en améliorant les infrastructures aéroportuaires, tout en créant les conditions nécessaires pour que la liaison de Monrovia devienne une destination de choix.

## Côte d'Ivoire : Henri Konan Bédié : « Voici Pourquoi j'ai suspendu le dialogue... »

du plomb dans l'aile dans le dialogue politique engagé entre Alassane Ouattara et Henri Konan Bédié ?

Rencontrant des Atchans ce week-end en sa résidence de Cocody, le président du PDCI-RDA a révélé avoir suspendu le dialogue entamé avec le chef de l'Etat, le 11 novembre dernier à Golf hôtel.

« Le dialogue qui s'est amorcé à l'hôtel du Golf, vous en avez entendu parler, depuis quelques jours, vous n'entendez plus rien, et c'est pour des raisons précises », a relevé l'ancien président de la République, avant de poursuivre. « Il n'est impossible de continuer ce dialogue sans la libération de tous nos militants, tous nos cadres incarcérés. Il n'est pas possible de continuer ce dialogue sans la levée du blocus qui assiège encore quelques-uns d'entre eux

comme Hubert Oulaye. Donc j'ai suspendu ce dialogue jusqu'à ce que nos frères soient libérés. J'ai suspendu également ce dialogue jusqu'à ce que ceux qui ont été forcés de fuir à l'étranger opèrent un retour sécurisé chez nous. Et ce sont là des préalables non négociables. Et je pense bien que dans quelques jours, ces différentes libérations seront faites pour que nous puissions reprendre le dialogue ou parole qui a été rompu entre Alassane Ouattara et moi-même. » « Il pose désormais des conditions pour poursuivre les négociations avec le Président de la République, Son Excellence Monsieur Alassane Ouattara. Il prend même le risque de suspendre de façon unilatérale les dites négociations et subordonner leur reprise à la satisfaction de certains préalables dont la libération de toutes les personnes interpellées.

## COMMENTAIRE

Par George Soros

## L'Europe doit tenir tête à la Hongrie et à la Pologne

NEW YORK - La Hongrie et la Pologne ont opposé leur veto à la proposition de budget de l'Union européenne pour un montant de 1 150 milliards € sur sept ans, ainsi qu'au fonds de relance européen de 750 milliards €. Bien que ces deux pays soient les plus grands bénéficiaires de ce budget, leurs gouvernements refusent catégoriquement que l'accès aux fonds soit conditionné au respect de l'État de droit, une exigence imposée par l'UE à la demande du Parlement européen. Ils sont en effet conscients de violer l'État de droit à plusieurs égards scandaleux, et refusent d'en payer les conséquences.

Ce n'est pas tant au concept abstrait de l'État de droit que s'opposent le Premier ministre hongrois Viktor Orbán et, dans une moindre mesure, le dirigeant de facto de la Pologne, Jarostaw Kaczyński. Ce qu'ils voient d'un mauvais œil, c'est plutôt le fait que l'État de droit représente une limite pratique à leurs manœuvres de corruption personnelle et politique. Leur veto constitue la tentative désespérée de deux transgresseurs en série.

Sans précédent, ce refus intervient à l'heure où l'Europe souffre d'une augmentation vertigineuse du nombre de cas de COVID-19. Le veto a plongé dans la confusion les représentants des autres pays de l'UE. Mais une fois le choc passé, une analyse étroite révèle qu'il existe un moyen de le contourner.

En effet, les réglementations sur l'État de droit ont bel et bien été adoptées. En cas d'absence d'accord autour d'un nouveau budget, le budget précédent, qui expire fin 2020, est alors prolongé annuellement. En l'occurrence, la Hongrie et la Pologne ne percevraient aucun versement en vertu de ce budget, puisque leurs gouvernements ne respectent pas l'État de droit.

De même, le fonds de relance, baptisé Next Generation UE, pourrait être mis en œuvre en recourant à une procédure de coopération renforcée, comme l'a proposé Guy Verhofstadt. Si l'UE empruntait cette voie, le veto Orbán-Kaczyński serait alors contourné. La question est de savoir si l'UE, avec peut-être en chef de file la chancelière allemande Angela Merkel, est capable de mobiliser la volonté politique nécessaire.

Je suis un partisan engagé de l'UE en tant que modale de société ouverte bâtie sur l'État de droit. Juif hongrois d'origine, je suis particulièrement préoccupé par la situation en Hongrie, où j'œuvre en tant que philanthrope depuis plus de 30 ans.

Orbán a construit en Hongrie un système kleptocratique très élaboré, qui lui permet de faire secrètement les poches au pays. Si les montants à hauteur desquels il est parvenu à enrichir sa famille et ses amis sont difficiles à estimer, nombre de ses proches sont devenus excessivement fortunés. Orbán use désormais de la nouvelle vague de COVID-19 pour faire amender la Constitution hongroise et la loi électorale (une fois de plus), ainsi que pour

consolider à vie sa position de Premier ministre par des moyens constitutionnels. C'est une véritable tragédie pour le peuple hongrois.

Laissez-moi vous donner quelques exemples de la manière dont Orbán dépouille la population hongroise. Il a transféré d'importantes sommes d'argent public vers un certain nombre de fondations privées, qu'il contrôle indirectement. Par un mécanisme constitutionnel astucieux, Orbán retire désormais de manière permanente ces actifs du domaine public ; il faudrait une majorité de deux tiers au Parlement pour restituer ces actifs au peuple hongrois. Les montants en question atteignent près de 2,8 milliards \$.

Dans une série de transactions frauduleuses, les sociétés proches d'Orbán ont acheté plus de 16 000 respirateurs au nom de la Hongrie, pour quasiment 1 milliard \$, soit bien au-delà de nombre de lits de réanimation et de personnels médicaux susceptibles de recourir à ces respirateurs. Une analyse des données commerciales internationales révèle que c'est la Hongrie qui au sein de l'UE a dépensé le plus pour acheter des respirateurs en provenance de Chine, déboursant à une certaine période plus de 50 fois plus que l'Allemagne.

L'une de ces sociétés a également conclu une commande auprès de la Slovaquie, dont le Premier ministre Janez Janša est un proche allié politique d'Orbán. L'Office européen de lutte antifraude (OLAF) doit faire la lumière sur cette possible escroquerie à l'encontre de l'UE. De même, le récent contrat relatif au vaccin russe, en vertu duquel la Hongrie sera le premier pays européen à en bénéficier, mérite que l'on s'y intéresse de près.

Pendant ce temps, Orbán cherche à s'exonérer de toute responsabilité dans ces manœuvres, et prend des mesures pour empêcher que se reproduise l'épisode des élections locales de 2019, lorsque son parti le Fidesz avait perdu le contrôle du gouvernement municipal de Budapest et d'autres grandes villes. Il ne ménage pas ses efforts pour priver Budapest de ressources financières, opposant un veto à la demande de la ville consistant à emprunter de l'argent à la Banque européenne d'investissement pour acheter de nouveaux équipements de transport en commun compatibles avec la distanciation sociale. Il manque désormais à Budapest 290 millions \$ dans son budget pour 2021. Des situations similaires s'observent dans d'autres villes dont la municipalité n'est pas contrôlée par le Fidesz.

Les partis d'opposition en Hongrie tentent courageusement d'affronter Orbán en formant une liste commune de candidats pour les élections législatives de 2022. Leurs chances de réussite sont malheureusement limitées, dans la mesure où Orbán est susceptible de changer les règles en un instant, comme il l'a déjà fait à plusieurs reprises. Choix bien commode, Orbán prévoit d'apporter ses tout derniers changements à la loi électorale au moment même où la pandémie fait rage, où Budapest se trouve sous couvre-feu, et où les soldats patrouillent les rues.

# Motorcyclists go amok

By Emmanuel Mondaye

The Somalia Drive suburb of Monrovia particularly from the intersection of Barnesville to St. Francis community, leading to Paynesville City became no-go area early Monday, November 23, 2020 when angry crowd violently took the street to protest the instant killing of a commercial motorcyclist (name undisclosed) by a yellow commercial transport bus popularly known here as

counter-attack, more than four bikes were set ablaze in the same vicinity, prompting riot forces of the Liberia National Police to fire teargas canisters to disperse the protesting crowd and subsequently restore calm.

One eyewitness said the minor came from nearby New Georgia community to see a family member when he was killed in the accident.

Dorothy Wilson, who claimed to have witnessed the accident, narrated that the bus driver lost control when the vehicle

Somalia Drive to prevent frequent motor accidents on the route.

She said speed-breakers would compel drivers in the habit of speeding unnecessarily to reduce their speed each time they arrive at a speed-breaker.

Speaking in tears for the deceased, she called on the Liberia National Police (LNP) to vigorously impound and remove defective objects including vehicles plying the streets to prevent frequent accidents in Monrovia and its suburbs as the Christmas festive season approaches.

Liberia's roads continue to witness vehicle and motorcycle accidents due to either drunk-driving or excessive speed, often resulting to loss of lives and properties.

Police disclosed arrest of over 20 persons in connection with the violence that saw normal traffic along the Barnesville Junction to 72nd Junction route momentarily obstructed. Police Spokesman Inspector Moses Carter late Monday four persons were arrested in the Jacob Town community, for allegedly burning four bikes.

Commercial cyclists here are noted for instantly resorting to violence each time one of their members is involved in a fatal accident, characterized by arson attacks against the vehicle involved.

About two weeks ago, similar violence between cyclists and commerce bus operators occurred along the Mount Barclay route outside Paynesville district after a commercial bus reportedly collided with a cyclist, killing him on the spot. **-Editing by Jonathan Browne**



“Killer bean.”

The bus driver allegedly suffered brake failure near Barnesville Junction and instantly ran into the motorcyclist, smashing him to death.

According to eyewitnesses, the 13-year-old lad had parked at the side of the Somalia Drive to allow a passenger disembark, when he met his instant death, prompting fellow motorcyclists to go amok, setting the bus ablaze in apparent retribution.

In what was described as a

developed break problem.

She explained that after observing the brake problem, the driver of the vehicle immediately disembarked and started alarming to alert bystanders, but the victim was not paying attention when the bus ran into him.

She noted that the situation caused several individuals standing along the route to disembark from vehicles, including local petrol sellers to set the bus ablaze.

Madam Wilson called on the Ministry of Transport (MOT) to erect speed-breakers along the

Cont'd from page 6

Headquarters of the Liberia Revenue in Paynesville, LRA Commissioner General Thomas Doe Nah described the introduction of the electronic fiscal device system as a groundbreaking intervention for the mobilization of domestic revenues for Liberia.

He said the introduction of the electronic fiscal device for tracking sales data of businesses marked the beginning of more important undertakings to be initiated to promote accountability and enhance revenue collection.

Also speaking, the Chairman of the National Investment Commission

## GoL signs agreement

Molewuleh Gray said the coming into effect of the electronic fiscal device project seeks to generate opportunities to increase revenue collection and augment fiscal monitoring while at the same time create jobs.

He praised partnering government stakeholders for their contributions leading to the successful finalization.

For his part, TRACOM's Managing Director Paul Njau said the project is part of efforts to strengthen enterprise development in Africa and encouraged more of such smart investments across the continent.

He assured the commitment of TRACOM Liberia Limited to diligently implement the electronic fiscal device project so as to yield the results intended.

The fiscal device system implementation will be fully led by the Liberia Revenue Authority and supported by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Other members of the IMCC were Ministry of Labor, National Bureau of Concession, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Justice among others. **Press Release**

# Retreat on ECOWAS code of ethics and professional conduct

The Office of the Secretary General, in collaboration with the Department of General Administration and Conference, held a three-day retreat on ECOWAS Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for staff of ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies from 19 - 21 November, 2020 in Lagos, Nigeria.

The retreat was an initial stage in the process of institutionalization of ethics among ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies and was chaired by the Secretary General of the Commission - Dr. Nelson Magbagbeola. He welcomed participants on behalf of the

communities (RECs) on the African continent and that ECOWAS has achieved a lot in its work programme especially in the areas of regional economic integration, political stability, peace and security. However, he noted that ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies have suffered reputational damage because of unethical behaviour of a few staff members.

Participants examined the current ECOWAS Code of Ethics, identified areas of improvement and discussed the ECOWAS core values of integrity, honesty, transparency, loyalty, accountability and



President of the Commission, His Excellency Jean-Claude Kassi BROU, and stated that the overall objective of the retreat was to sensitize staff members of the ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies on the importance and elements of code of ethics and professional conduct in ECOWAS with a view to developing a strategy and action plan of promoting ethics in ECOWAS.

He highlighted that ECOWAS has built credibility, reputation and positive image within the Community and among the development partners as one of the leading regional economic

professionalism.

Presentations on Ethical issues in ECOWAS Financial Management, Status of Implementation of Risk Management, Staff Regulations, ECOWAS Procurement Code and ECOWAS Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct were discussed.

The Retreat also featured presentations on Tools and Strategies for Promoting Ethics in a Corporate Organizations and the experiences of the African Union Commission in Ethics Promotion and the highlights from the GIZ/European Union on areas of support to ECOWAS.

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# Referendum not cancelled

By Winston W. Parley

Minister of State for Presidential Affairs Nathaniel F. McGill has announced here that the controversial referendum will be held as planned, days after Liberia's Supreme Court granted main opposition Collaborating Political Parties (CPP's) request prohibiting the conduct of the National Referendum combined with the conduct of the senatorial election due 8 December.

At a press conference attended at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Monrovia by scores of media representatives Monday, 23 November, McGill accused the opposition of misrepresenting the court's decision, saying the court did not stop the referendum.

"As you know, as soon as the Supreme Court came up with its ruling, people [were] celebrating, they say the referendum was cancelled. The referendum is not

others, did not come from President George Manneh Weah, but Liberians themselves.

In response to concerns that President Weah could seek more than two terms if the presidential tenure is dropped to five years, judging from what is taking place in neighboring countries, Mr. McGill insists that the president is not going for third term.

"There will be no third term here," he says, though suggesting that if the proposition to reduce the tenure of the president goes through successfully, "every Liberian citizen will be qualified."

"The president still get one more term to run for and if we decide to keep for six years, he get one more term. The president not going for third term, take that one from out of the story," he explains, while being quizzed by a journalist.

Regarding criticisms that not much education has been

political tension which have kept the nation on its heels, and this in part has left others thinking that many people here might just get lost on the issues contained in the referendum while focusing on deciding who should be their candidate in the senatorial election.

However, McGill calls on those in the opposition to vote yes to the propositions in the referendum if they love the country and believe that the tenure of the president is too long.

He believes that there has always been conflict in Liberia because people always want to stay in power for too long, but President Weah believes that it is an opportunity for the citizens to always go to the ballot box to decide the leadership.

"The only way you will not support the referendum except you don't love this country; except you are a greedy politician who wants to stay long in power, you don't want the people to decide," McGill argues.

He explains that the referendum is on course, saying the Supreme Court has been misrepresented as it did not halt the referendum.

"The referendum will proceed as planned, and we are asking all Liberians that [this] referendum, these recommendations are not recommendations coming from the president," he says, adding that the recommendations come from the people of Liberia.

McGill urges all Liberians to vote yes on each of the eight propositions that will be on the ballot box.

The Supreme Court on Wednesday, 18 November prohibited the NEC from printing ballots for the referendum, contrary to a joint resolution of the Legislature and Article 92 of the Constitution, ruling that the NEC proceeded by the wrong rule, therefore, prohibition will lie.

It said the act of the commission in deviating from the clear language of the Legislature's resolution by combining and condensing the eight propositions into three categories quite contrary to the provision of Article 92 of the Constitution which specifically mandates that each of the eight propositions be stated separately on the ballot to afford voters the opportunity to exercise their right of choice is prohibited.

**Editing by Othello B. Garblah**

provided for Liberians to know what they will be voting on 8 December, Mr. McGill argues that the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) headed by Justice Gloria Musu Scott five years ago took two years to get citizens' participation on the propositions in the referendum across the country.

Cllr. Scott and the CRC did their work during former President Ellen Johnson - Sirleaf's regime about two years prior to the inception of the current administration.

Prior to the court's ruling on 18 November, the government had been facing public criticisms for combining the senatorial election with the referendum, mainly for concerns that there has not been much publicity in terms of awareness for the people to have a clear understanding of what they are expected to be voting for in the referendum.

The senatorial election brings its own stress and serious



cancelled," he says.

Mr. McGill indicates that the National Elections Commission (NEC) had announced just the previous day to the press conference that it is in the process of printing the ballot papers for the referendum in line with the Supreme Court's mandate.

McGill's comments were backed at the press conference by Liberia's Solicitor General Cllr. Saymah Syrenius Cephus, who also noted that "the referendum is on course," adding that there will be separate and distinct ballot paper for each of the article of amendment.

McGill argues that the recommendations in the referendum including reduction of the tenures of the president and representatives from six to five years; nine to seven years for senators; approval for dual citizenship, among

# CBL's Board retains

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3.5 percent in 2019, the CBL noted.

Monetary policy rates in advanced economies remained stable at 0.25 percent and 0.10 percent in the United States and the United Kingdom, respectively. On the regional front, monetary policy rates in most countries of the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ) remained stable, except in Nigeria, where the rate was lowered.

## Domestic Macroeconomic Developments

Real gross domestic product for 2020 is projected to remain in contraction at 2.5 percent, despite the resumption of several businesses in quarter 4 of 2020 due to the easing of lockdown measures.

Annualized inflation moderated by 2.7 percentage points to 15.3 percent at the end of quarter 3 from 18.0 percent at the end of quarter 2, reflecting weak domestic demand and relative effectiveness of monetary policy operations.

Developments in the external sector were mixed, but generally constrained by low gross international reserves below the ECOWAS regional threshold of three months.

The deficit in trade balance

account expanded to 6.43 percent of GDP from 3.79 percent of GDP in the previous quarter, largely reflecting 25.15 percent rise in import payments and 10.0 percent contraction in export receipts.

The net inflow of workers' remittance rose by 2.1 percent to US\$49.4 million in quarter 3, from 48.4 in quarter 2 of 2020. However, the Liberian dollar appreciated against the US dollar in nominal and real terms by 4.5 percent and 13.3 percent, respectively, at the end of September 2020.

In quarter 3, the banking industry generally remained stable, despite the rise of non-performing loans by 4.4 percent above the regulatory tolerable limit. Currency outside the banking system rose by 8.2 percent to L\$20.83 billion, while currency in the banking system declined by 15.4 percent to L\$1.27 billion during the period.

In the operationalization of the Board's decision regarding the monetary policy implementation, the CBL says it intends to pursue extensive financial education with the aim of engendering greater public subscriptions of the CBL's instruments during the remaining weeks of 2020 and beyond.

# Judge faces complaint

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without his knowledge and consent coupled with presenting of such instruments by Judge Willie to one Hans Armstrong for publication in local dailies.

Logan pleads with the chief

justice to take cognizance of the alleged "unethical behavior of Judge Willie who has brought untold embarrassment" not only to the complainant, but to his business partners and clients.

# MPC's candidate backs

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seat, Cestos City.

He promised to push for additional high schools for River Cess if elected senator in the upcoming December 8 senatorial elections.

The candidate vowed to proffer a bill that would seek to prohibit health workers from owning pharmacies or drug stores. He believes this would prevent health workers from diverting medications meant for public health facilities to their private businesses.

Meanwhile, Mr. Strother has been named campaign manager for 'Team Tequah' campaign in River Cess.

Steve Tequah is the latest to

announce his candidacy in the race for River Cess. In July, 2020, Steve told a local radio talk show that he was getting in the race to change the old order of politics in the county. He's one of the main contenders in the election. A majority of the people think the candidate is the right person for the job. They feel he stands the chance of reconciling a county divided on sectional lines. Except for the other main contenders (former Superintendent Wellington Geevon-Smith and Bob Rancy Ziankahn), Steve hasn't held position at the level of the county. He's being viewed by many as the lesser evil.

# Judge faces complaint before Chief Justice

## -A fallout MHM Eko-Liberia's trial



Chief Justice Francis S. Korkpor, Sr.,

Criminal Court "A" Judge Roosevelt Z. Willie has been complained to Chief Justice Francis S. Korkpor, Sr., by Mr. Chapman Logan, equating the judge's alleged order for the production of the complainant's call log and other information to an "unethical behavior" by the

judge. Mr. Logan's complaint dated 19 November follows a writ of subpoena deces tecum in May this year commanding the management of Lonestar GSM Company to appear on 7 May before the court to provide call log on phone numbers listed in the instrument. The subpoena instructs that

the company provides detailed call log and sim card registration, photos, addresses, cell ID, text messages and location of the subscriber from 1 January to present.

This paper has gathered the Logan's complaint is said to be link with the legal battle between the Senate Secretary Mr. Nanborlor F.Singbeh and officials of a rock crushing company MHM Eko-Liberia, reportedly owned largely by two Czech brothers, Martin and Pavel Miloschewsk.

But in the complaint addressed to the Chief Justice, Logan says at no time did he have any matter pending before Criminal Court "A" or being investigated by the court for the period it stated in the writ of subpoena for Lonestar GSM to provide his call log and other information.

He laments that this is done

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# CBL's Board retains 25% monetary policy rate

The Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL), announced Monday that its Board of Directors have approved to retain the country's monetary policy rate at 25% from the previous quarter. The was said to have taken the decision during its November 17, 2020 sitting. A statement issued by the CBL notes that the decision

was driven by developments in the global and domestic economies in quarter three, projected headline inflation in the bandwidth of about 14.7 plus or minus 3.0 percentage points for quarter 4, and the high level of currency outside banks. The monetary policy rate of 25.0 percent is expected to support liquidity management by not only attracting investment for the CBL Bills, but also retaining currency in the



banking system, while at the same time strengthening CBL's capacity to protect the purchasing power of consumers.

**Global and Regional Developments**

On the global front, commodity prices relatively strengthened during quarter three of 2020, with global inflation for 2020 projected to moderate at 3.2 percent, from

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