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TRULY INDEPENDENT

VOL.10 NO. 227

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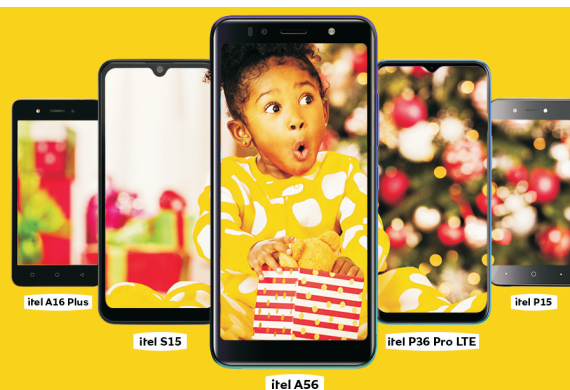
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# Continental News

## Rwanda bolsters force in CAR as rebels 'held back'

Rwanda has deployed what it called a "protection force" to the Central African Republic after its peacekeepers there were attacked by rebels advancing to the capital, Bangui.

The Rwandan and CAR governments have accused ex-President François Bozizé of backing the rebels and plotting a coup, which he has denied. UN peacekeepers have said the rebel advance has been halted.

Mr Bozize has been barred from a presidential election due on Sunday.

Russia has also sent "several hundred soldiers and heavy weapons" to the country to support the government, the AFP news agency quotes a CAR government spokesman as saying. The spokesman, Ange Maxime Kazagui, said the Russian forces were invited as part of bilateral agreements, AFP reports.

"The Rwandans have also



CAR President Faustin Archange Touadéra was seen at an election rally escorted by the presidential guard and Rwandan UN peacekeepers

sent several hundred men who are on the ground and have started fighting," he added. The number of additional Rwandan soldiers deployed has not been given but the defence ministry said the operation was done "under existing bilateral agreements" with CAR.

At least 750 Rwandan soldiers and police officers have been operating under the UN peace keeping force Minusca. Minusca forces have also been deployed beyond Bangui "to block armed elements", AFP quotes a UN spokesman as saying.

President Faustin Archange Touadéra has insisted Sunday's election will go ahead, saying the presence of the army and UN peacekeepers means people have nothing to fear.

But opposition parties, including that of Mr Bozizé, have called for the vote to be postponed "until the re-establishment of peace and security".

Rebel groups have seized several towns close to CAR's capital, clashing with government forces and looting property, and the UN said its troops were working to prevent a blockade of Bangui.

Mr Bozizé's spokesman Christian Guenebem said: "We categorically deny that Bozizé is at the origin of anything." The CAR is one of Africa's poorest and most unstable countries, even though it is rich in resources like diamonds and uranium. The UN estimates that half of the population are dependent

on humanitarian assistance and up to a fifth have been displaced.

On 3 December CAR's Constitutional Court ruled that Mr Bozizé did not satisfy the "good morality" requirement for candidates because of an international warrant and UN sanctions against him for alleged assassinations, torture and other crimes during his rule. Mr Bozizé, a Christian, came to power after a coup in 2003 and subsequently won two elections that were widely seen as fraudulent. He was ousted in 2013 by the Séléka - a rebel coalition drawn largely from the Muslim minority - which accused him of breaking peace agreements. The country has since been caught in conflict between the Séléka and the so-called "anti-Balaka" self-defence forces, who are mainly Christian. A militia has continued, and the UN has blamed rebel groups for the country's instability, BBC

## South Africa working with WHO over its virus variant

South African scientists said they are working with the World Health Organization to investigate a new variant of coronavirus, currently surging in many parts of the country.

The new variant known as 501.V2 was identified by a genomics team led by the KwaZulu-Natal Research Innovation and Sequencing Platform. It was discovered earlier this month, when scientists noticed a number of mutations during routine

surveillance of the virus.

Local scientists say that South Africa's new variant appears to be unrelated to the one found in the UK.

But it does share one important mutation. The shared mutation affects the way the virus attaches to human cells - and scientists speculate that is what is behind the faster transmission of this virus.

Researchers in the UK say the mutated virus there is 70% more transmissible. But experts in South Africa say they are still

gathering data on this, but expect this may be the case here too.

In South Africa the new variant was first found in the Eastern Cape province and has since spread to the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

The country recently entered a second wave of infections, which has led to new regulations to try to slow the spread of the disease, including the closure of some of the major beaches.

Mutations in viruses are not uncommon, experts say. It is not clear at this stage whether the new variants are more deadly. Scientists say more research is needed on this, and also on whether the mutations could lessen the effectiveness of vaccines.

Health officials have reiterated calls for people to keep following the same Covid-prevention protocols until more is known about the new variants. Some countries have now banned flights from South Africa and the UK including Germany and Switzerland. While El Salvador has banned any travellers who were in the UK and South Africa in the last 30 days, BBC



## 'Abandoned' bomb kills three in Ethiopia's capital



There is no indication that this bombing is linked to the Tigray crisis

Three people have been killed and five others wounded after an abandoned bomb exploded in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, police say.

The blast happened in the city's Lideta neighbourhood on Sunday.

The people who died were homeless and living on the streets, senior police officer commander Alemayehu Ayalke told state broadcaster EBC.

There is no indication that this explosion is linked to the crisis in the northern Tigray region.

Fighting between federal and regional troops from the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) began there on 4 November and has forced

50,000 people into Sudan.

There have been other incidents in which police said "abandoned" bombs were either found or detonated in Addis Ababa in recent weeks, but most of those did not cause deaths, says the BBC's Kalkidan Yibeltal.

Reuters news agency reports that police have blamed the TPLF in several previous cases, but have not produced evidence to back up the accusation.

"An investigation regarding the explosion is now going on and the public will be informed once the investigation is completed," the state-owned Ethiopia News Agency reported on Sunday, BBC



# EDITORIAL

## Our disappointment from the senatorial election

**WE ARE SAD** and disappointed that the December 8, 2020 special senatorial elections in Gbarpolu and Grand Kru counties have degenerated to violence over contention whether there should be a rerun or recount in disputed districts of the counties.

**WE, LIKE OTHER** peace-loving Liberians have thought the polls that were generally peaceful throughout the country would have ended in similar manner in the two counties.

**BUT REPORTS COMING** out of the two remote counties since December 8 are very worrisome and distressing, to say the least, with the National Elections Commission yet to clearly announce when a rerun would be held in Gbarpolu to declare a clear winner, as will be decided at the ballot box by the people.

**IN GRAND KRU** County there is lack of concession between the National Elections Commission and the opposition Candidate Nathaniel N. Bahway of the Liberia National Union (LINU) whether to rerun poll or recount votes in Buluwin Town, electoral district#2.

**ACCORDING TO REPORTS**, NEC chairperson Davidetta Browne Lansanah has vehemently rejected call by LINU for a rerun, citing legal provisions governing elections and lack of notice by its Grand Kru county Magistrate for a rerun between governing Coalition for Democratic Change Candidate incumbent Senator Peter D. Coleman and his main rival Nathaniel N. Bahway.

**WITH BOTH SIDES** in Gbarpolu County using country devils as weapons to threaten supporters of rival candidates, it is obvious a new date for a rerun would not be announced soon by the NEC. We fervently pray and hope that would be done before the New Year to close this chapter, ahead of 2023 presidential and general elections.

**THIS IS IMPORTANT** to solidify the current democracy we enjoy as a nation when we had the first democratic transition in 2018 from a sitting president to another in more than 50 years. While we applaud the Weah administration for conducting generally a peaceful election, government should do everything necessary to close this chapter void of violence and protests.

**IF POLLS IN** Montserrado, Bong, Grand Bassa and Nimba were peaceful, there is no reason why this cannot be done in Gbarpolu and Grand Kru counties. The onus is on the government to ensuring that rerun and recount are held in both counties peacefully.

**AS WE END** the year 2020, the least any Liberian expect is lingering or unresolved electoral issues into the New Year, because an untreated symptom today could developed into a serious political crisis with unexpected consequences.

**THE MINISTRIES OF** Justice and Internal Affairs, and the NEC should exert all efforts urgently to resolve the electoral issues across the country to save our young democracy from crumbling, for we don't want a return to the dark days of our 14-year civil war.

**The New Dawn**  
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+231-775407211 Managing Editor: Othello B. Garblah; Editor-In-Chief: Jonathan

# COMMENTARY

By Shlomo Ben-ami

## The Arab Spring Ten Years Later

*From the return of Russia to the normalization of relations between Israel and a growing number of Arab states, the decade since the Arab Spring continues to redraw the Middle East's geopolitical map. The outcome will depend on a several factors, not least whether - or when - the goal of democracy mobilizes Arab populations again.*

**T**EL AVIV - When the struggling street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi set himself alight in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, on December 17, 2010, he could not possibly have imagined how consequential his desperate protest would be. By sparking a wave of civil unrest across the Arab world, he touched off the region's most profound transformation since decolonization.

First, Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution erupted, leading to the ouster of the country's longtime president, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Protests quickly engulfed other Arab countries, and more autocrats - namely, Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, Libya's Muammar el-Qaddafi, and Yemen's Ali Abdullah Saleh - were toppled.

In Syria, President Bashar al-Assad managed to hold onto power - at the cost of plunging his country into a brutal civil war that has killed more than a half-million people, forced millions to flee the country, and left millions more internally displaced. The conflict returned Syria to the Russian fold, and turned its territory into an Iranian-Israeli battlefield.

Most of those who managed to overthrow their autocrats in the so-called Arab Spring didn't see their democratic hopes blossom. Yemen's "Coffee Revolution" quickly evolved into a civil war between the central government and the Iran-backed Houthi rebels. Though Saleh eventually resigned, the Yemeni people got no relief. On the contrary, Saudi Arabia led a brutal intervention against the Houthis, turning Yemen into the site of a savage proxy war with Iran. The result has been the world's worst humanitarian catastrophe.

As for Libya - already an artificial colonial creation - its regime change, brought about by Western humanitarian intervention, was chaotic. Since 2011, the country has been subsequently torn apart by fighting among forces backed by a variety of external actors, including Egypt, Russia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates, as well as renegade generals and local warlords.

The dominoes continued to fall for years, with Algeria's Hirak Movement erupting in February 2019 - six days after Abdelaziz Bouteflika announced his candidacy for a fifth presidential term. The protests drove Bouteflika to resign, and resulted in a large-scale boycott of the presidential election in December 2019. The winner of that election, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, is merely a new civilian face for seemingly eternal military rule.

The Arab Spring exposed the innate fragility of many of the affected states. While some leaders managed to hold onto power, and some repressive military apparatuses remain robust, weak legitimacy, often based on rigged elections, leave them highly vulnerable, especially in the face of tribalist and Islamist sentiment. (It is no coincidence that the Arab monarchies - Morocco, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia - which derive their legitimacy largely from religious sources, fared much better than the pseudo-presidential republics.)

By exposing state weakness, the Arab Spring opened the way for the rise of the Islamic State, a Sunni terrorist group, in parts of Syria, Iraq, and the Sinai Peninsula where central governments

had no control. Though local and international forces eventually dismantled ISIS's "caliphate," the group still has affiliates in Egypt, Syria, and Libya. As long as the problem of state weakness goes unaddressed, Sunni warlords will continue to emerge.

People seem to be pinning their electoral hopes on political Islam, which has emerged as the main alternative to secular autocracy over the last decade. Wherever free elections took place, Islamist parties won power. Tunisia's moderate Ennahda party, for example, was integral to making the country the Arab Spring's only true success story, with all three elections since 2011 having led to peaceful transfers of power.

In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi won the presidency in 2012. But, after just over a year in power, the military, led by Field Marshal Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, ousted him and installed a regime even more repressive than Mubarak.

No story of the Middle East's recent transformation can be complete without the United States. In his recently published memoir, Barack Obama confessed that if he were a young Egyptian, he would have joined the protesters in Cairo's Tahrir Square in 2011. Instead, as US president, he sacrificed America's two closest regional allies, Mubarak and Ben Ali, opening the way for a redrawing of the Middle East's strategic map.

As Mohammed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, made clear to Obama, allowing Mubarak's ouster and accepting Morsi's electoral victory gave the impression that the US was not a reliable long-term partner. Compounding this sense of betrayal among America's Arab partners, Obama subsequently negotiated the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran, and rebalanced US strategic priorities toward Asia, thereby opening the way for Russia to expand its influence in the Middle East.

Non-Arab regional powers - Iran, Turkey, and Israel - have also been quick to capitalize on Arab woes. While America was busy fighting ISIS, Iran helped rescue the embattled Syrian regime and deployed its own forces along Israel's borders. Its reach now extends from Syria and Iraq to the shores of the Mediterranean in Lebanon.

Meanwhile, Turkey has become the dominant force in Northern Syria, where it claims to be preventing an autonomous Kurdish state from emerging on its doorstep, and has consolidated its military presence in Qatar. Even the influx of Syrian refugees to Turkey has become a powerful bargaining chip for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has threatened to send millions to Europe if its leaders criticize his dictatorial practices.

But perhaps the most shocking outcome of recent upheaval in the Arab world relates to Israel. Viewing the country as a necessary power broker in America, and now a reliable ally in the fight against Iran, a number of Arab states - Bahrain, the UAE, Morocco, and Sudan - have normalized bilateral relations. Once Saudi Arabia follows suit, the Arab-Israeli conflict will effectively end, even though the Palestinian question remains unresolved. This is a dramatic paradigm change in Middle East politics.



## O-PED

By Ifeanyi M. Nsofor

# Helping Premature Babies Survive

*Approximately one million premature babies die each year from complications at birth. New research offers hope for the treatment of at-risk mothers, but interventions in at least four other areas are necessary to help save more newborn lives.*

**A**BUJA - Preterm birth complications are the leading cause of death globally for children under five. Of the 15 million babies born before the 37th week of pregnancy every year, approximately one million will die. But new research conducted at secondary and tertiary health facilities in Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Nigeria, and Pakistan offers hope for increased survival rates.

These countries have some of the world's highest numbers of preterm births. But a randomized clinical trial - known as Antenatal Corticosteroids for Improving Outcomes in Preterm Newborns (WHO ACTION-I) - proved that administering the steroid dexamethasone to pregnant women at risk of preterm birth in low-resource settings can boost their babies' chance of survival, without increasing the incidence of bacterial infection in mothers. For every 25 pregnant women treated with the steroid, one premature baby's life was saved.

As a young medical doctor undergoing training at a teaching hospital in Nigeria, I carried out blood transfusions in premature infants with jaundice. It is a tedious process that can lead to infections in newborns. The possibility of sparing mothers and their babies from such life-threatening procedures is one reason to consider the WHO ACTION-I trial a lifesaver.

But as important as the trial's results are, this treatment for at-risk mothers cannot save every premature baby. There are at least four other ways to address some of the risk factors for premature births, while increasing child survival.

First, every pregnant woman should attend antenatal classes provided by skilled health workers. These classes are great platforms for giving women and their partners the right information for a safe pregnancy and screening for risk factors like hypertension and diabetes. Pregnant women could also undergo an ultrasound to check for multiple pregnancies and cervical weakness. If either is found, the pregnancy can be designated as "high risk" and managed conservatively, usually by an obstetrician.

In Nigeria, two-thirds of pregnant women already attend some form of antenatal clinic. While COVID-19 has limited the frequency of antenatal clinic visits, they are sometimes offered online or through community outreach by health workers, so that pregnant women do not have to travel long distances. One of Nigeria's foremost midwives, Tolu Adeleke, is pioneering online childbirth preparation classes for pregnant women and their partners.

Second, all women should deliver in health facilities under the supervision of skilled health workers. In many parts of the world, this is not the case. Studies show that 59% of childbirths in Nigeria take place at home, 35% of childbirths in Bangladesh are handled by traditional birth attendants, and 53% of deliveries in Kenya take place outside health facilities. Delivering in a health facility increases newborn survival rates, especially for women at risk of premature birth. Policymakers should deploy community health workers to provide information on the risks of home-based deliveries and accompany pregnant women to these facilities.

While such a strategy cannot address every reason why some women deliver at home - such as difficulty in reaching a health facility - it can help overcome the simple lack of knowledge about the benefits. In 2016, EpiAFRIC evaluated the SURE-P Maternal and Child Health Project, one of Nigeria's top nationwide maternal-health interventions. A major finding was that after the project's introduction, 32.1% more pregnant women gave birth at health facilities. The increase also led to more newborns being vaccinated against polio, hepatitis B, and tuberculosis.

Third, neonatal services that increase the survival rate of premature newborns must be improved. One example is kangaroo mother care, which helps to keep newborns warm. Premature newborns can suffer from hypothermia, and this type of care means they are carried (usually by the mother), with skin-to-skin contact providing warmth. In situations where the mother is incapacitated, her partner can step in. Another intervention that can increase newborn survival rates is access to alternative sources of breast milk. It is more challenging to begin breastfeeding a premature baby immediately after birth, and breast milk banks can provide screened and pasteurized supplies. Research in Ethiopia shows that mothers are more likely to accept donated breast milk if they are well informed about it.

Finally, all girls should be enrolled in school. When a mother is educated, she is more likely to attend antenatal clinics, deliver in health facilities, and practice other healthy behaviors. But more than 130 million girls are out of school globally, and COVID-19 lockdowns are likely to increase this number. The link between education and healthy behaviors underscores the impact of external social conditions on health outcomes. Health planners, program managers, governments, the private sector, and donors must bear these conditions in mind when planning interventions.

The WHO ACTION-I trial is an important step toward increasing premature babies' survival rate. But addressing the other risk factors face is also necessary to help ensure that every mother, including those in low-resource settings, takes home a healthy newborn.

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## OPINION

By Minxin Pei

# China's Green Gambit

*China's ambitious climate pledges have drawn praise the world over. But China will demand a high price for its contributions and can be expected to use its promise of international cooperation to undermine any containment strategy that US President-elect Joe Biden's administration tries to pursue.*

**C**LAREMONT, CALIFORNIA - Can US President-elect Joe Biden walk and chew gum at the same time? If walking is managing domestic pressures, and chewing gum is pursuing a balanced foreign policy, the answer is far from clear. The tension between bipartisan calls to contain China and the imperative of cooperating with Chinese President Xi Jinping on climate change is a case in point.

Biden plans to marshal a broad alliance of democratically-minded Pacific and European countries to check China's expansionism. In Xi's view, however, China may be able to use the promise to cooperate on climate change as a source of leverage with which to thwart Biden's containment strategy, especially in light of Republican opposition to climate action and hostility toward China.

The stakes could not be higher. Humanity faces a truly calamitous future if the world's two largest economies - and largest CO2 emitters - don't commit to cooperating to address climate change. And yet the grim prospect that the Sino-American geopolitical competition will hamper climate cooperation is rarely discussed in either Washington or Beijing.

In the United States, the prevailing wisdom is that curtailing its CO2 emissions is in China's self-interest. Beyond being the world's largest CO2 emitter, China is the world's leading consumer of coal, accounting for 52% of global use. And high levels of pollution threaten to undermine support for the ruling Communist Party among a growing Chinese middle class demanding a cleaner environment. International pressure is also mounting.

Unfortunately, this view fails to account for China's belief that, on climate change, the West needs it more than it needs the West. It will thus demand a high price, especially from the US and its European allies, for its contributions. And, to avoid losing the international community's goodwill - or overplaying its hand - it will likely proceed in a calculated manner.

The first prong of China's strategy is already visible. At the recent Climate Ambition Summit, convened by the United Nations, Xi reiterated his pledge to reach peak CO2 emissions before 2030 and to achieve carbon neutrality before 2060.

Xi also vowed to meet even more ambitious climate goals by 2030. These include lowering CO2 emissions per unit of GDP by 65% (from 2005 levels); ensuring that renewables account for a quarter of primary energy consumption; and increasing total installed wind and solar capacity to more than 1.2 billion kilowatts (roughly three times China's installed capacity in 2019). Such declarations aim to boost China's international profile - and put the US on the spot.

The second prong of China's strategy has not yet been unveiled, but it is reasonable to expect it to try to leverage its apparent climate leadership to secure economic and political concessions. China would first call for broadly cooperative, non-confrontational international dialogue and request tariff reductions - outgoing President Donald Trump's administration imposed a 30% tariff on Chinese solar panels - and clean-technology transfers, to help it meet its climate commitments. Besides these pragmatic demands, China's leaders will be tempted to pressure the West to tone down its criticisms of Chinese human-rights abuses, particularly the crackdown in Hong Kong and the mass incarceration of largely Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang.

This two-pronged strategy will put Biden in a bind. If his climate pledges fall short of the international community's expectations, China will look like the more responsible power. If he commits to ambitious climate goals, Republicans will undercut his credibility by sabotaging the relevant policies in Congress and the courts. Even if Republicans do not manage to block climate action today, there is the risk that a Republican administration - possibly even led by a second-term President Donald Trump - could reverse them in 2024, as Trump did when he became president in 2017.

At the same time, given bipartisan antipathy toward China in the US, Biden would probably not be able to grant even modest concessions on tariffs or technology transfers, and he would be under intense pressure to confront Xi over human-rights abuses. China could then use this as an excuse to adopt a similarly hardline stance, insisting that Biden make irrevocable climate commitments - an impossible demand given Republican opposition - before it takes more action.

The resulting stalemate would appear to be America's fault, undermining its position vis-à-vis China on the world stage. But it is from a climate perspective that this scenario would be truly catastrophic. The Biden administration must recognize how easily it can happen - and do everything possible to ensure that it doesn't.

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## ARTICLE

## ARTICLE

# Four things to know on how Liberia is reforming its economy amid the COVID-19 crisis

By Mika Saito

IMF African Department

On December 21, 2020, the International Monetary Fund provided additional financial assistance of \$XX to the Republic of Liberia under a program launched at the end of last year. This decision follows debt relief and emergency assistance approved by the IMF earlier this year and is fully embedded in a reform agenda that the Liberian authorities are implementing to further stabilize the economy.

Here are four things to know:

1. The COVID-19 pandemic hit Liberia at a time of pre-existing fragility. The country held elections in 2017, leading to the first democratic transition of

The COVID-19 pandemic hit Liberia during this difficult adjustment phase.

2. The government has worked hard to meet humanitarian needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. By taking lessons from the Ebola crisis, policy response was prompt. On March 21, the government mandated a general lockdown and enforced severe social distancing. But this policy response was costly in terms of economic slowdown, trade disruptions, and food insecurity. The Fund, along with other partners, provided emergency support during the height of the crisis. This most recent IMF assistance complements those actions as Liberia accompanies the difficult reform agenda the authorities have been pushing through amid the COVID-19 crisis.

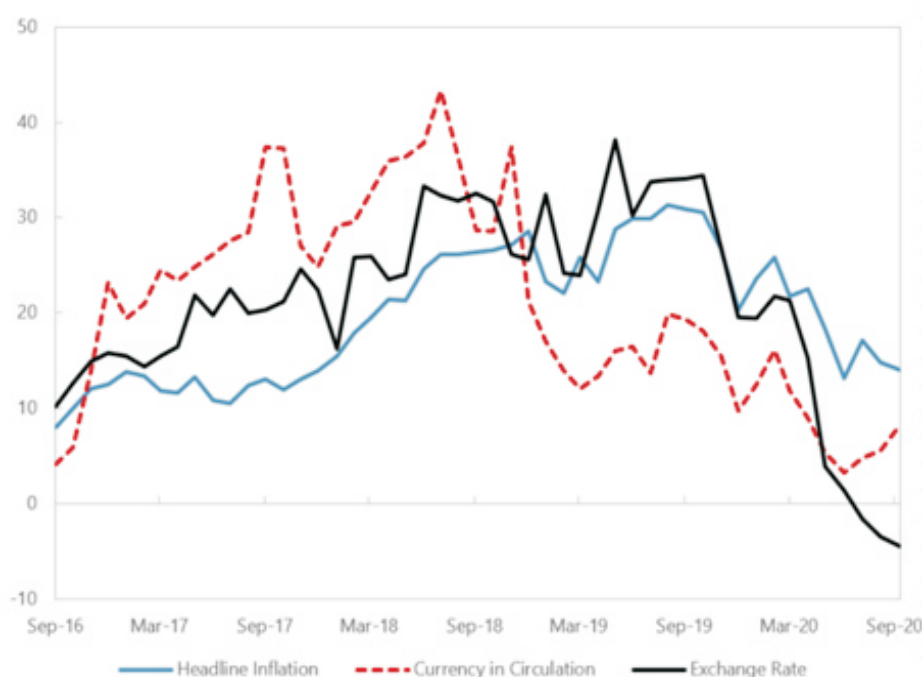
3. The government's decisive actions and reform efforts have begun to bear fruit. At its peak in FY2018/19, the civil service wage bill accounted for 10 percent of GDP (or 70 percent of domestic revenue), which was crowding out the government's fiscal space for much needed development, infrastructure, health, and education spending. The authorities took the difficult but necessary decision to cut the wage bill in all three branches of the government by 10 percent in the FY2019/20 budget, while still allowing the lowest-paid government employees to receive the minimum wage. The government also eliminated allowances that were not only costly but also adversely affected the morale of civil servants due to perceptions of unfairness. The action eliminated central bank financing of fiscal deficits. This eased inflation providing benefits to the poorest Liberians who mostly earn Liberian dollars in this dual currency economy.

4. Reform efforts at the central bank have focused on rebuilding confidence in the banking sector. In October 2020, the National Legislature approved amendments to the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) Act. With this amendment, the CBL now has more operational autonomy in enhancing the quality and quantity of Liberian banknotes. The CBL also has a formal mandate to ensure financial stability. With this new mandate, the CBL is committed to strengthening the financial supervisory and regulatory framework and in turn the banking sector that can support post-COVID recovery efforts.

## Inflation is coming down

Liberia's inflation rate has decreased by more than half since the start of an IMF program in 2019.

(12-month percent change)



INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

power between different political parties since 1944. Following the inauguration of the new administration in 2018, the United Nations Mission in Liberia, which had been in the country since the peace agreement of 2003, handed over its security responsibilities to the national police and military. These transitions coincided with the winding down of increased foreign aid after the 2014-16 Ebola outbreak. These events caused a sharp decline in net foreign exchange inflows to the country. This in turn heightened pressure on the Liberian dollar exchange rate and on inflation. To stabilize the economy, the authorities had to make difficult adjustments to an economy with less foreign exchange inflows, which created significant hardship for the Liberian people.

# Season Bonanza

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REQUEST FOR QUOTATION

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### Background and Context

The United States of America, acting through the Millennium Challenge Corporation ("MCC") and the Government of Liberia (the "Government" or "GoL") have entered a Millennium Challenge Compact for Millennium Challenge Account assistance to help facilitate poverty reduction through economic growth in Liberia (the "Compact") in the amount of approximately 256,726,000 USD ("MCC Funding"). The Government, acting through Millennium Challenge Account - Liberia (the "MCA Entity"), intends to apply a portion of the MCC Funding to eligible payments under a contract for which the Request for Quotation ("RFQ") is issued.

MCA-Liberia now invites priced quotations from eligible firms/suppliers for the Supply and Delivery of Accounting Software, HR Software & Antivirus Lot 1, Phone System Lot 2, Laptops Lot 3, Emergency UPS Lot 4 and Backup Software Lot 5. More details on the requirement are provided in the Technical Specifications and the RFQ. The RFQ is open to all eligible entities ("Suppliers") who wish to respond. Subject to restrictions noted in the RFQ, Suppliers may associate with other Suppliers to enhance their capacity to successfully deliver the goods.

The RFQ is for:

Supply and Delivery of Accounting Software, HR Software & Antivirus Lot 1, Phone System Lot 2, Laptops Lot 3, Emergency UPS Lot 4 and Backup Software Lot 5

### How to Participate in the Process:

Interested firms/suppliers should send an email to [MCALiberiaPA@cardno.com](mailto:MCALiberiaPA@cardno.com) requesting a copy of the RFQ, which is free of charge.

Important dates:

No.	Activity	Dates
1	Release of RFQ	December 17, 2020
2	Last date for questions/clarifications	December 18, 2020
3	MCA-L Response to Questions/Clarifications	December 21, 2020
4	Deadline for Submission of Quotations	December 23, 2020 at 5:30 pm



# MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS

## COVID-19 Food Distribution goes to Margibi, Nimba Counties

Thousands of happy household members in Margibi and Nimba Counties are currently receiving their planned food rations as COVID-19 Household Food Support Programme (COHFSP) distribution intensifies in their communities. The food rations - comprising 50 kg of rice, one gallon of vegetable oil, and 28 cups of beans - are being provided by the

Mr. Sarkor, distribution has already been completed in Gibi and Firestone Districts while 60 percent has been obtained for Manbakaba and 6,000 out of 11,000 households have been completed in Kakata Districts.

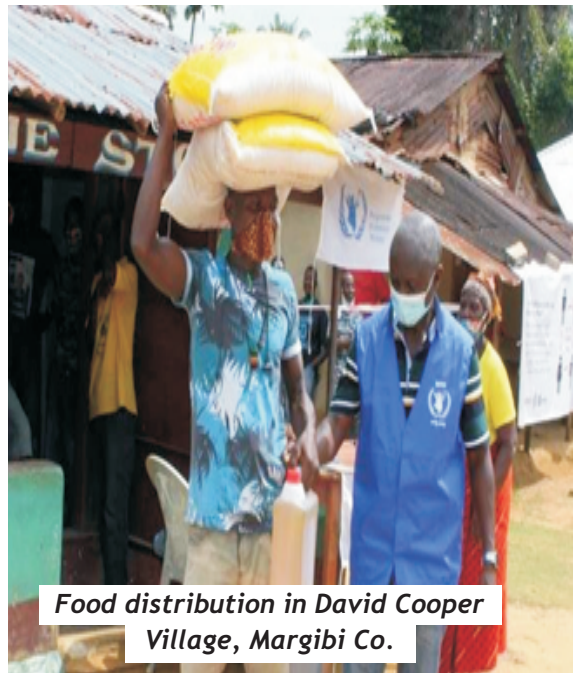
"As I speak to you, I can confirm that this distribution work is in full gear. In Nimba County alone, food has been trucked and propositioned by WFP in 13 out of 17 districts,

situation on the lack of proper awareness-raising. "Lack of information and public awareness is the major hurdle driving disinformation among the people and that needs to be corrected," he added.

Meanwhile, community residents are expressing happiness and gratitude to the government, WFP, and partners for the food. B-Ma Kamara, 32, is a mother of



COVID-19 food distribution in Kakata, Margibi Co



Food distribution in David Cooper Village, Margibi Co.

Government of Liberia through the World Food Programme (WFP) and partners.

"More than 29,000 households in Margibi's four districts (Gibi, Firestone, Kakata, and Manbakaba) have been enumerated to benefit from the food rations," said Linus Sarkor, Programme Coordinator of Volunteers for Sustainable Development in Africa (VOSIEDA), the NGO partner of WFP that is spearheading the food distribution in the two counties. According to

distribution is actively ongoing in five districts while distribution in Mainpea-Mahn District has already been completed with other districts nearing completion," said Mr. Sarkor.

Mr. Sarkor, however, expressed concerns over the "continuous disruption of distribution by some community residents who do not understand the selection criteria and the mandate of the COHFSP that the food is intended only for the most vulnerable and not for everybody". He blamed the

three girls in Margibi County: "Do you know what it means for your government and WFP to bring food to you free? I want to fall and roll over on this coal tar with happiness."

Victoria Gibson, 37; Mary Williams, 40; Famatta Cooper, 33; Otis Kweh, 36; Annie Sackie, 21 and many other beneficiaries welcomed the food support. "I have two children, no food. See my daughter here? She is crying because she is hungry. I only want to say thank you," said Mary Williams.

## BCTC Graduates 22 since its Establishment

The Bong County Technical Colleague on Saturday December 19, 2020 graduated its first batch of students nearly nine years since the establishment of the institution.

The College released degrees for 22 students who had completed the required courses in Agriculture and Secondary Education.

A total of 16 Candidates graduated from the Agriculture department and six from secondary education.

Dr. Edward Lama Wonkaryor, the commencement speaker challenged graduates to be focused and forge for higher education.

Dr. Wonkaryor said being compliant is the beginning of failure but the ego to push for higher education and make impact bring prosperity and developments.

He said if graduates make use of what they have learned; it will improve their personal lives and help the society to run smoothly.

"Education is the most empowering force in the world; it creates knowledge, builds confidence, and breaks down barriers to opportunity. So I want to challenge you to

make proper use of what you have learned and forge for more once the opportunities are provided" Dr. Wonkaryor adds.

Meanwhile, the Colleague's President Dr. Roland Massaquoi has described the graduation as a beginning of an 'undisturbed' process.

Dr. Massaquoi said once the BCTC has been able to put out its first batch of graduates, the institution is now set to ensure the continuation of the exercise every academic year.

He said it doesn't matter how many years the students spend in the school for 10 or 12 years adding that what matters is the students should be able to complete all of the required courses before graduation.

According to him, within the next six to nine months, the school will be graduating another batch; "this time, the number will be huge".

Our Bong County County Correspondent said some of the students who had gone to grace the graduation ceremony of their colleagues were seen dancing during the occasion not only because of their colleagues but because the school has broken what they called graduation record.

By: Joseph Titus Yekeryan in Bong County

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## Expired chicken, smuggled 10% Beer flood the market

By Emmanuel Mondaye

Security sources in Monrovia, Margibi, and Nimba counties have disclosed that some foreign businesses operating in the country are taking advantage of the market by dumping expired chicken products and smuggled 10% Beer on the Liberian market for public consumption.

On 16 December 2020 at about 8:37 PM, security officers in Parker Paint Community, Paynesville arrested a truck loaded with expired 10% drinks.

Information gathered



Cartoons of Brasil -Sadia chicken & cold storage from which the expired products are being sold to public

indicates the truck with red and white colors and license plate # LBC - 51160 bearing the service name 100% Liberian, was intercepted while trying to dump the product at the warehouse of a private businessman only identified as Yan.

Mr. Yan, said to be dealer of flour products, allegedly owns the expired drinks, even though the sole importer of the expired 10% Beer is AFROPA situated in Sayon Town, Bushrod Island.

Speaking to reporters following the arrest of the truck, an agent of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) who begged for anonymity, since he is not the official spokesperson of

the ministry, disclosed that based on intelligence gathered, he and other officers posted themselves around the Parker Paint area to ensure the truck conveying the expired drinks is arrested.

The security source explained the truck was then spotted with the description, license plate and colors mentioned thus, it was intercepted at the Parker Paint and Redlight intersection.

The source continued that upon inspection, they discovered a large quantity of 10% drinks onboard the truck.

Minutes later, a Liberian businessman and dealer of flours only identified as Mr. Yan arrived at the scene of the arrested truck and confirmed

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 10



## MORE HEADLINE NEWS

## MORE HEADLINE NEWS

# Weah honors ECOWAS, UN Envoys

By Winston W. Parley

At an investiture ceremony, the Liberian government has decorated two distinguished ECOWAS and UN Envoys posted to Liberia for their exceptional services to the country and its people

Commission in Liberia and Dr. Kingsley Okpoku - Amaning, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Liberia during the ceremony, before the Ministry of Internal Affairs here bestowed traditional Liberian names on the foreign diplomats.

In a special statement at the

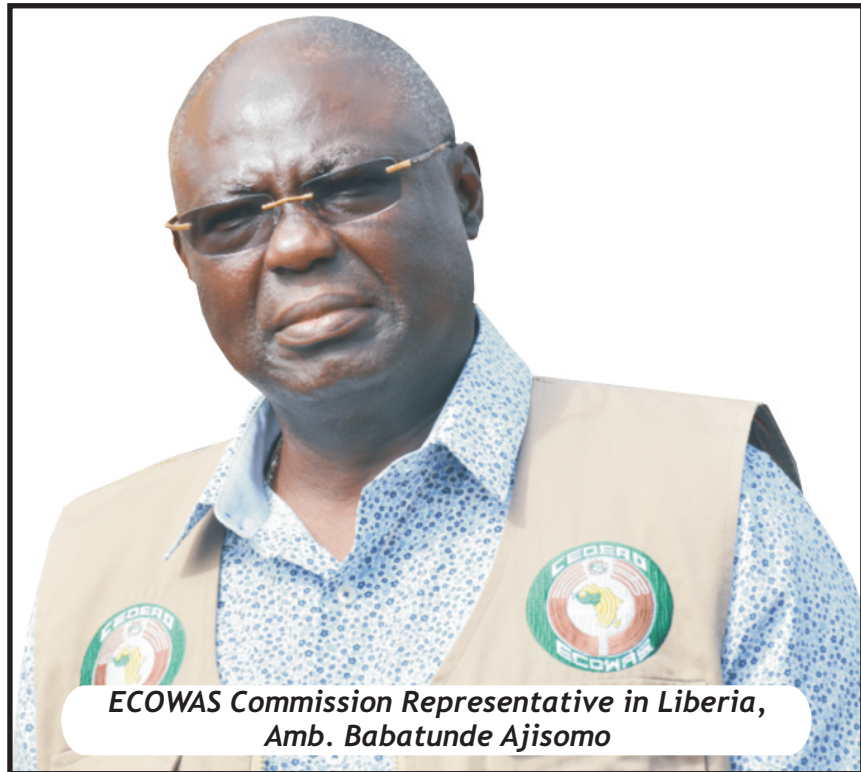
President Weah admitted Amb. Ajisomo into the Unique Order of African Redemption with the grade of Grand Band, while also admitting Dr. Amaning into the Order of the Star of Africa with the grade of Grand Commander.

He says as the Envoys end their respective tour of duties in Liberia, the investiture ceremony is not meant to only say goodbye to them, but also to express profound gratitude to them for their dedicated, exemplary and highly effective services to the people of Liberia.

Reading a citation for Amb. Ajisomo at the ceremony, Liberia's Chief of Protocol Rev. Jarvis Witherspoon notes that the Nigerian diplomat in his role as ECOWAS Envoy has been facilitating the implementation of ECOWAS' policies, protocols and decisions of the Authority of Heads of States including the activities of ECOWAS Specialized Agencies.

He notes that this is aimed at promoting democracy, good governance, rule of law, security sector reforms, gender equality, youth empowerment as well as human rights awareness and protection, including facilitating infrastructural development in Liberia and the sub-region.

Recalling his tireless and active negotiations to mediate and resolve political disputes here, the Liberian government notes that prominent among Amb. Ajisomo's activities are his



ECOWAS Commission Representative in Liberia, Amb. Babatunde Ajisomo

during their tour of duties as representatives of their respective institutions.

President George Manneh Weah decorated Ambassador Babatunde O. Ajisomo, Special Representative of the President of ECOWAS

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Monday, 21 December at the ceremony, President Weah expressed thanks "to two of the most outstanding diplomats who have ever been assigned to Liberia," Amb. Ajisomo and Dr. Amaning.



▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 11

# "Cultural Carnival One Way to Unite Liberians"

--Pres. Weah lauds organizers

President George Manneh Weah has lauded the organizers of the country's first-ever cultural carnival which took place on Saturday, 19 December.

In a press release, the Executive Mansion says the event involved the conglomeration of various dancers, musicians and other performers who paraded the

innovative way of uniting Liberians, using their culture while also developing artistic talents and improving the country's economy.

Mr. Weah praises La Queen Entertainment and its CEO Miss Wokie Dolo, and Ambassador Kekurah Kamara, Head of Malawala Balawala for their innovation and pledges his continuous support for all such



streets of Monrovia to showcase Liberia's traditional heritage.

Participants marched, rode and danced from the Ministerial Complex in Congo Town to the Samuel Kanyon Doe (SKD) Sports Complex in Paynesville in a unique display of Liberia's rich cultural mosaic.

The President says the ceremony presents an

efforts intended to promote the country's culture and artists.

The President calls on Liberians to emulate the example of the organizers by taking pride in their cultural heritage.

He wishes the event will grow from strength to strength and become an annual affair, as the idea resonates with more people.—Press release

# U.S. Embassy issues financial alert here

The United States Embassy in Monrovia issues an alert, warning travelers coming to Liberia to be aware that it may be difficult to obtain cash from banks in Liberia and should plan accordingly.

The alert published here Monday, 21 December on the U.S. Embassy's official website notes that Liberia's banking sector has experienced a growing shortage of cash - both U.S. and Liberian dollars - over the last several months.

It says as a consequence, it is difficult to obtain adequate cash supplies from ATMs and banks, while revealing there are no ATM facilities for public use at the U.S. Embassy.

U.S. citizens traveling to Liberia with amounts of U.S. dollars over \$10,000 must be reported upon entry into the



country, and travelers may leave with no more than \$7,500 U.S. dollars.

Meanwhile, the alert

cautions travelers coming here to take the following precautionary actions, including making sure health

insurance plan provides coverage overseas, as most care providers overseas only accept cash payments;

bring cash sufficient for the duration of trip to Liberia, secure personal possessions when in public areas; avoid displaying or carrying unnecessary valuables and large sums of money; pay expenses such as hotels and flights by credit or debit card when possible, and check with vendors to ensure credit or debit cards are accepted.

The alert notes there have been reports of financial information being compromised even at hotels where credit cards are routinely accepted.

The alert comes as even ordinary Liberians seeking cash withdrawals at various commercial banks in Monrovia are being seriously restricted, due to severe shortage of banknotes, a situation that is posing strain on business transactions and the economy. -

Story by Jonathan Browne

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# Français

## Sénatoriales 2020 : Nathaniel Blama crie au scandale

Des ressortissants Sierra Léonais ont voté lors des élections sénatoriales de mi-mandat du 8 décembre, s'est inquiété le président national de l'Union nationale du Libéria, Nathaniel Blamah.

« L'inspecteur général de la police, le colonel Patrick Sudue, a admis à la radio que 36 Sierra-Léonais ont été arrêtés avec des cartes d'électeurs libériens dans le comté de Grand Cape Mount », a dit M. Blamah lors d'une conférence de presse à Monrovia ce week-

end.

« C'est vraiment terrible, le fait que des étrangers s'immiscent dans le processus électoral du pays. C'est aux Libériens de décider de qui doit les diriger, pas les étrangers », s'est-il plaint.

Il a appelé le gouvernement à procéder à une enquête rapidement pour prendre des mesures afin d'éviter que de tels actes se répètent.

L'Union nationale du Libéria s'oppose à un recomptage des bulletins de vote dans les bureaux de vote contestés du

comté de Grand Kru. Le parti a dit avoir suffisamment de preuves qui montrent que les sceaux ont été brisés et que les urnes ont été bourrées.

« Permettez-moi d'avertir la Commission électorale. Vous avez organisé des élections très pacifiques. Mais toute tentative de contourner la volonté et les aspirations du peuple risque de saper l'ensemble du processus démocratique.

Il y a un bras de fer entre la

► CONT'D ON PAGE 9



## Liberia, « Misterliar man » : George Weah sort une nouvelle chanson pour solder ses comptes

George Manneh Weah a véritablement de l'imagination. En effet, le président du Libéria a publié une nouvelle chanson reggae dans laquelle il a répondu à ses critiques comme « MisterLiar Man » et en même temps justifié son innocence dans de nombreuses

accusations contre sa personne.

Au Liberia, on parle tellement des abus du Président George Weah que cela l'a amené à exprimer son chagrin et sa colère dans cette chanson qu'il a publiée cette semaine. « Mr Liar Man », la quatrième chanson sortie par

l'ancienne star du football africain, qui est devenue un politicien et parfois même un musicien, a suscité de vives réactions dans le pays. « Je n'ai pas fait les choses que vous aviez dit que j'avais faites, MisterLiar Man ... Jah vous jugera », le Président Weah, sur un ton jamaïcain, a chanté les lignes de sa nouvelle chanson.

Au Liberia, la chanson est diffusée dans les principaux programmes du matin à la radio, elle est aussi devenue le sujet de discussions dans les médias sociaux, chacun commentant la chanson soit en se moquant, soit en appréciant le Président. Par exemple, Abraham Darius Dillon, un critique anti-gouvernemental bien connu, pense que le président George Weah faisait référence à un correspondant de la radio nationale libérienne, qui a



► CONT'D ON PAGE 9

## Guinée : Vista Bank rachète la Bicigui



C'est désormais fait. C'est Vista Bank qui a racheté les 52% de parts qu'avait la BNP Paribas dans la BICIGUI. Le Président du Conseil d'administration de Vista Bank, le burkinabé Simon Tiemtoré, a profité de son invitation en Guinée à l'occasion de l'investiture du président Alpha Condé pour avoir une réunion avec la BCRG et faire un point sur sa relation avec la BNP Paribas.

C'est depuis 2019, que le Groupe BNP Paribas avait annoncé via un communiqué « l'ouverture d'une réflexion stratégique en vue de céder sa participation dans le capital de sa banque de détail en Guinée, la Banque Internationale pour le Commerce et l'Industrie de Guinée (BICIGUI) ».

Depuis cette date, Vista Bank était en compétition avec le Groupe Atlantic Bank. L'Etat guinéen, bien que ne possédant que 15% d'actions, a choisi Vista Bank, selon nos informations.

A cette occasion, contacté par notre rédaction, le gouverneur de la Banque Centrale de la République de Guinée (BCRG), Louceny Nabé, a confirmé l'information.

Selon lui, « c'est la BNP Paribas qui a décidé de se désengager de ses filiales de Guinée, du Mali, du Burkina Faso et du Gabon. Elle a fait un appel d'offres. Des groupes bancaires ont soumissionné dont Vista qui est déjà adjudicateur des filiales de Guinée et du Burkina Faso. Nous sommes

informés de l'évolution de la situation ».

« Mais, explique-t-il, en tant que BCRG, superviseur et président du Comité des agréments, nous ne nous sommes pas encore saisis. Mais, tout ceci sera après la décision du Comité des agréments d'entériner l'acquisition par Vista Group. »

Nabé pense que le Comité des agréments sera bientôt saisi si l'accord est conclu. « Nous allons être contactés comme le gouverneur de la BCRG est le président du Comité des agréments. Et le moment venu, le comité se réunira et se prononcera », rassure le gouverneur de la BCRG.

S'agissant du coût de cette opération, M. Nabé est resté très prudent. Le prix de ce deal bancaire, « c'est entre le vendeur et l'acheteur. Même s'ils doivent nous informer, on n'est pas partie prenante de la transaction. Mais, le moment venu, nous nous demanderons les dossiers techniques sur la base de ce que la loi bancaire exige en terme d'équilibre global, en terme de régularité de l'acquisition, etc.

D'ailleurs, si on avait une bourse, cela aurait pu se faire à la bourse puisque la BNP Paribas a des propriétaires d'actions. »

Par ailleurs, faut-il noter que la BICIGUI est la première banque de Guinée pour son maillage territorial avec une trentaine d'agences à travers tout le pays.

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# Français

## Sénatoriales 2020 : Nathaniel

Commission électorale nationale et les responsables de la LINU sur la question de savoir s'il faut procéder à un comptage des voix ou à une reprise de l'élection dans le district n° 2, Buluwin Town.

Blama a déclaré lors d'une conférence de presse à Monrovia que l'opposition et les candidats indépendants ont l'impression que l'on veut truquer les élections en faveur de Dr Peter Coleman, le candidat de la coalition au pouvoir, dans le comté de Grand Kru.

Des votes devraient avoir lieu prochainement dans trois circonscriptions, dont la localité de Boluwin.

M. Blamas'est dit déçu par le refus de la présidente de la NEC Mme Davidetta Browne Lansanahs'accéder à la requête de la LINU de procéder à une reprise de l'élection, invoquant les dispositions

légalles régissant les élections. Actuellement le candidat de la LINU est en tête dans le comté de Grand Kru avec 22,22% des voix.

M. Blamadénonce également une tentative d'intimidation dont serait victime son parti dans le comté de Grand Kru, de la part des forces de l'ordre et de sécurité du Libéria.

Selon lui, deux responsables dont le président du parti du comté de Grand Kru, Samson Collins, et James Wheler, représentant du parti, ont été arrêtés, intimidés et se trouvent maintenant derrière les barres. Ces responsables sont accusés d'incitation à la violence.

Les informations disponibles dans ce journal indiquent qu'à Barclayville, des membres du bloc d'opposition, y compris des candidats indépendants, ont uni leurs forces pour demander la publication inconditionnelle des résultats du scrutin.

## Liberia, « Misterliar man » :

récemment été limogé pour avoir critiqué son leadership dans le pays, dans un message via Facebook. Certains observateurs de la vie politique et des médias affirment que le Président George Weah a exercé des représailles contre cet ancien fonctionnaire.

Récemment, ancien directeur adjoint de la radiodiffusion rurale au Liberia Broadcasting System, J.V Boima a fui le Liberia lorsqu'il a accusé le Président Weah d'avoir des relations avec sa femme. Dans une fuite audio, J.V Baima a été entendu dire à un collègue que le Président avait acheté une voiture pour sa femme avec qui le dirigeant entretenait une relation amoureuse. Toutefois, le bureau du Président et ses opposants continuent de nier les allégations.

Rappelons qu'au début des années 2000, le Président George Weah a sorti une chanson qu'il a psalmodiée avec d'anciens footballeurs européens sur l'amour et l'unité en Afrique. En 2014, il a chanté avec un musicien ghanéen, Sidney, dans une chanson visant à sensibiliser sur l'épidémie d'Ebola qui avait éclaté dans la région de l'Afrique de l'Ouest. Ces derniers mois, il en a publié un autre, dans lequel il parle de la lutte contre la pandémie du Covid-19.

La chanson du Président George Weah, Coronavirus, a été présentée dans des programmes de radio locaux et internationaux et a été utilisée pour produire des jingles de sensibilisation contre le Covid-19 au Liberia. Une chose est toutefois sûre, dans cette nouvelle chanson, le Président George Weah solde ses comptes.

## COMMENTAIRE

Par Shlomo Ben-ami

## Le Printemps arabe dix ans plus tard

**T**ELAVIV - Lorsque le vendeur ambulant Mohamed Bouazizi s'est immolé par le feu à Sidi Bouzid en Tunisie, le 17 décembre 2020, il n'aurait jamais pu imaginer toutes les conséquences de son geste de désespoir. En déclenchant une vague de révolte populaire dans l'ensemble du monde arabe, il est devenu le symbole de la plus profonde transformation connue par la région depuis la décolonisation.

La révolution du jasmin est d'abord survenue en Tunisie, conduisant à l'éviction de son président de longue date, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. La révolte a rapidement gagné les autres pays arabes, dont ont également été chassés les dictateurs Hosni Moubarak en Égypte, Mouammar Kadhafi en Lybie, et Ali Abdallah Saleh au Yémen.

En Syrie, le président Bachar el-Assad est parvenu à conserver le pouvoir - au prix d'une plongée du pays dans une terrible guerre civile qui a fait plus d'un demi-million de morts, contraint à l'exil plusieurs millions de Syriens, et fait plusieurs millions de déplacés au sein du pays. Le conflit a par ailleurs remplacé la Syrie sous l'influence russe, et fait de ce territoire un champ de bataille entre Iraniens et Israéliens.

La plupart de ceux qui étaient parvenus à renverser leur dictateur lors du fameux Printemps arabe n'ont pas vu se concrétiser leurs espoirs démocratiques. La révolution yéménite a rapidement évolué en guerre civile brutale entre le gouvernement central et les rebelles houthis soutenus par l'Iran. Bien que Saleh ait fini par se retirer, le peuple yéménite n'a obtenu aucune avancée. Au contraire, l'Arabie saoudite a mené une violente intervention contre les Houthis, transformant le Yémen en violent territoire de guerre par procuration contre l'Iran, avec pour conséquence la pire catastrophe humanitaire de la planète.

Quant à la Lybie - qui était déjà une création coloniale artificielle - son changement de régime, fruit de l'intervention humanitaire occidentale, s'est révélé absolument chaotique. Depuis 2011, le pays a été successivement déchiré par des combats entre forces soutenues par divers acteurs extérieurs incluant Égypte, Russie, Turquie et Émirats arabes unis, sans oublier des généraux hors de contrôle et autres seigneurs de guerre locaux.

L'effet domino s'est poursuivi pendant des années, avec l'apparition du mouvement Hirak en Algérie en février 2019 - six jours après l'annonce par Abdelaziz Bouteflika de sa candidature pour un cinquième mandat. La révolte a poussé Bouteflika à se retirer, puis résulté en un boycott massif de l'élection présidentielle de décembre 2019, dont le vainqueur Abdelmadjid Tebboune ne représente rien de plus que le nouveau visage civil d'un règne militaire qui semble éternel.

Le Printemps arabe a mis en lumière la fragilité innée d'un grand nombre des États concernés. Si certains de leurs dirigeants sont parvenus à s'accrocher au pouvoir, et bien que certains appareils militaires répressifs demeurent solides, leur faible légitimité, souvent basée sur des élections factices, les rend extrêmement vulnérables, notamment face au sentiment tribaliste et islamiste. (Ce n'est pas un hasard si les monarchies arabes - Maroc, Jordanie et Arabie saoudite - qui tirent leur légitimité de sources principalement religieuses, s'en sont beaucoup mieux sorties que les républiques pseudo-présidentielles).

En exposant la fragilité de ces États, le Printemps arabe a ouvert la voie à la montée en puissance de l'État islamique, groupe terroriste sunnite, dans certaines parties de la Syrie, de l'Irak et de la péninsule du Sinaï échappant au contrôle des gouvernements centraux. Bien que les forces locales et internationales aient fini par démanteler le « califat » de l'ÉI, le groupe conserve des ramifications en Égypte, en Syrie et en Lybie. Tant que le problème de la fragilité des États n'aura pas été résolu, des

seigneurs de guerre sunnites continueront d'émerger.

Les populations semblent placer leurs espoirs électoraux dans l'islam politique, qui est apparu comme la principale alternative à la dictature non religieuse ces dix dernières années. Lorsque des élections libres ont eu lieu, ce sont les partis islamistes qui l'ont emporté. Le parti modéré tunisien Ennahda a par exemple constitué la seule véritable réussite du Printemps arabe, les trois élections organisées depuis 2011 ayant conduit à une alternance pacifique du pouvoir.

En Égypte, le membre des Frères musulmans Mohamed Morsi a remporté la présidence en 2012. Après seulement une année au pouvoir, il a cependant été renversé par l'armée, conduite par le maréchal Abdel Fattah al-Sissi, qui a instauré un régime encore plus répressif que celui de Moubarak.

Aucun récit des transformations récentes au Moyen-Orient n'est toutefois complet sans que ne soient évoqués les États-Unis. Dans ses mémoires récemment publiés, Barack Obama a ainsi confessé que s'il avait été un jeune Égyptien, il aurait rejoint les manifestants de la place Tahrir au Caire en 2011. Au lieu de cela, à la présidence des États-Unis, il a sacrifié les deux plus proches alliés régionaux de l'Amérique, Moubarak et Ben Ali, ouvrant la voie à un redécoupage de la carte stratégique du Moyen-Orient.

Comme l'a fait clairement savoir à Obama le prince héritier de l'émirat d'Abou Dhabi et commandant suprême adjoint des Forces armées des ÉAU, Mohammed ben Zayed, le fait d'avoir laissé faire l'éviction de Moubarak et accepté la victoire électorale de Morsi a donné l'impression que les États-Unis n'étaient pas un partenaire fiable à long terme. Ajoutant à ce sentiment de trahison parmi les partenaires arabes de l'Amérique, Obama a par la suite négocié le Plan d'action global commun (PAGC) avec l'Iran, et réorienté les priorités stratégiques américaines en direction de l'Asie, permettant ainsi à la Russie de renforcer son influence au Moyen-Orient.

Les puissances régionales non arabes - Iran, Turquie et Israël - ont elles aussi rapidement profité des difficultés des pays arabes. Pendant que l'Amérique était concentrée sur la lutte contre l'ÉI, l'Iran est venu en aide au régime syrien assiégé, et a déployé ses propres forces le long des frontières avec Israël. Cette présence s'étend désormais de l'Irak à la Syrie et jusqu'aux côtes de la Méditerranée au Liban.

Dans le même temps, la Turquie est devenue la puissance dominante dans le nord de la Syrie, où elle entend empêcher la création d'un État kurde indépendant à sa proximité, de même qu'elle a consolidé sa présence militaire au Qatar. L'afflux de réfugiés syriens en Turquie est par ailleurs devenu une puissante monnaie d'échange pour le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan, qui a menacé d'en laisser plusieurs millions gagner l'Europe si les dirigeants européens continuaient de condamner ses pratiques dictatoriales.

Mais sans doute l'issue la plus saisissante de ce soulèvement récent dans le monde arabe concerne-t-elle Israël. Considérant le pays comme un nécessaire partenaire d'influence auprès de l'Amérique, et désormais comme un allié fiable dans la lutte contre l'Iran, plusieurs pays arabes - Bahreïn, ÉAU, Maroc et Soudan - ont normalisé leurs relations bilatérales avec Tel-Aviv. Une fois que l'Arabie saoudite les aura rejoints, le conflit israélo-palestinien prendra effectivement fin, même sans résolution de la question palestinienne. Il y a là un changement majeur de paradigme dans la politique du Moyen-Orient.

À l'approche de 2021, l'évolution du terrain géopolitique dans le monde arabe est vouée à se poursuivre. L'issue dépendra d'un certain nombre de facteurs, notamment de la question de savoir si, et quand, l'objectif de la démocratie mobilisera à nouveau les populations arabes.

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# Liberian voters did not understand the referendum

By J. Peter S. Dennis  
(LMD Fellow)

Multiple civil society organizations and civic groups expressed deep concerns ahead of the elections that the Liberian voters lacked proper understanding of the referendum and the propositions. Despite the calls, the Liberian government and the NEC went ahead with the organization of the process.

The results now show that the Liberian people profoundly lacked knowledge of the process, as the NEC official data shows that there were more invalid votes than valid cast.

Most of the voters we spoke with said that they

Commission to hear complaints from 30 days to 15 days, and finally, allowing dual citizenship and other citizenship provisions for Liberian nationals.

KorpoLabelah, 34, from Totota, Lower Bong County said, said that "From the beginning, I never had any information on the referendum. I did not understand those things, so I voted 'no' to all."

Like Korpo, 22-year-old Wilfred Loweal, another first-time voter, admitted that he voted "no" to the propositions because he was never educated. "Since this referendum business started, no one has ever convinced me on any of the counts. So, since I came to vote, I [marked] 'No' on all," he said.

Days before the voting, President George Manneh Weah

opposition CPP Senator-elect, Simeon Taylor, was reportedly attacked and set ablaze by alleged supporters of the ruling Coalition Candidate, Victor Watson, on Saturday, December 5, in Dambala Town, Porkpar District.

The opposition CPP party condemned the attack and urged the government to "stop the state-sponsored intimidation."

There were no major reports of electoral violence in Bong County, where the Deputy Speaker Prince Moyo emerged as winner. Mr. Moyo contested on the ticket of opposition Collaborating Political Parties (CPP).

Lower Bong County NEC election magistrate, Daniel Newland, confirmed there

## Referendum Results

Search:

#	PROPOSITIONS	YES	NO	VALID	INVALID	TOTAL
1	INALIENABILITY OF THE CITIZENSHIP OF NATURAL BORN LIBERIANS, DUAL CITIZENSHIP	13,446	11,878	25,324	49,405	74,729
2	CHANGE IN THE DATE OF ELECTION	15,003	8,697	23,700	51,029	74,729
3	SHORTENED TIME FOR NEC TO HEAR COMPLAINTS	11,501	10,013	21,514	53,215	74,729
4	REDUCTION OF THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE VICE PRESIDENT	16,106	10,691	26,797	47,932	74,729
5	REDUCTION OF THE TERM OF THE SENATORS	15,294	10,275	25,569	49,160	74,729
6	REDUCTION OF THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE	14,485	9,354	23,839	50,702	74,541
7	REDUCTION OF THE TERM OF OFFICE OF REPRESENTATIVES	14,439	9,204	23,643	51,086	74,729
8	REDUCTION OF THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER & DEPUTY SPEAKER	14,203	9,780	23,983	50,746	74,729

Showing 1 to 8 of 8 entries

Referendum Results in Bong county show that while most people voted in favor of the propositions, the number of invalid votes was almost double the number of valid ballots. Data Source: NEC

voted "No" on the propositions because they could not understand the symbols, or what the propositions were about.

The propositions to modify the national constitution included reduction of tenure for the presidency and the members of the House of Representatives from six to five years; reduction of the tenure of the Senate President Pro-Tempore from six to five years; reduction of the tenures for the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of the House from six to five years, respectively; change of date of presidential elections from the second Tuesday in October to second Tuesday in November to avoid the rainy season; reduction of the time for the National Elections

and executives of his ruling Coalition for Democratic Change party had encouraged Liberians to vote "Yes" to all eight propositions of the national referendum.

But the President did not provide sufficient justification why the public should vote "Yes" on everything.

President Weah also called on political parties and their leaders to encourage their respective supporters and supporters to remain peaceful during the election period. The President emphasized that peace and stability are paramount to democracy, urging citizens to avoid violence.

However, days before the election, violent clashes occurred in Grand Cape Mount County, where the convoy of the

was no violence. Newland added that his office has not received any complaint of electoral violence.

Senator-elect Moyo took to his Facebook page to thank the people of Bong for their confidence:

"Fellow Bongese [...] We feel exceedingly elated, grateful, and humbled by the overwhelming support we received across the county and subsequently becoming the winner in the end.

The election is over. Bong County has won. Let's put aside our political differences and work collectively for the common good of Bong. Thanks a million, Bongese, we will not fail you!"

A diaspora son of Bong County Mr. Dennis Garsinii, wrote on December 13, 2020

## Expired chicken

Cont'd from page 6

the drinks belongs to him.

The source said security officers advised Mr. Yan not to off-load the expired drinks until he can disclose where he got the drinks from but the businessman refused, allegedly.

According to our source, the 10% Beer was allegedly smuggled to Liberia from the Ivory Coast through Maryland County.

He said there and then, confusion ensued between the businessman and the arresting officers, which led to confiscating the truck keys from the operator, compelling the truck to remain to where it was arrested.

The officer narrated that thereafter they decided to leave one of their colleagues at the scene of the arrested truck to be able to get reinforcement to transfer the truck to a nearby LNP depot.

But, he notes, that upon their return at the Parker Paint locality where the truck was parked, they did not see the truck and their colleague there.

When they call the telephone of their colleague his cell-phone was either switched off or out of coverage area.

When the owner of the consignment Mr. Yan was contacted on the matter, he declined to speak to the press, while at AFROPA in Seyon Town, this paper was informed that the General Manager, who should speak on the issue, was not available.

In a related development, the Paynesville, Kakata, and

Ganta general markets respectively are said to be flooded with expired chicken products reportedly distributed by Fresh Frozen Food in Monrovia.

Information obtained indicates that a cartoon of the chicken which expired in October 2020, is being sold to customers for LRD1,950 instead of the original price of LRD2,250.00.

The expired chicken products are being transferred from the FFF branch #1 in Paynesville to Kakata and Ganta the company management for sale to the general public.

This is not the first time FFF has dumped expired frozen products on the Liberian market.

The company was arrested with huge expired chickens and drinks by agents of the Ministries of Commerce and Health.

The Government of Liberia, through the FFF management had to use several trucks to take the expired products from its storage facilities for disposal site outside Monrovia.

Government at the time also fined the company and warned it to desist from such bad business practices, but the warning seems to have fallen on deaf ears.

Information on the expired chicken cartoons indicates the product expired since 10th October 2020. Also, another chicken product known as 'soft bone' also brought into the country by FFF, are being sold to the public. **-Editing by Jonathan Browne**

## Season Bonanza

Beginning Monday, December 14, 2020 the New Dawn will open its classified Advert section to all businesses.

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after the pronouncement of Moyo as winner, wrote that "Never have I seen this much jubilation by the electorates for victory of their candidate of choice. It indicates that citizens of Bong County have been burdened and frustrated by division amongst the Bong C a u c u s a n d underdevelopment in the county. In you, they find a light of change and believe that you are the torch bear of the light."

As a result of the heavy

downpour on polling day, most polling places experienced low turn-out, with an average of 35.98% presence. And while voters faced inclement weather and constraints to come to vote, most of them expressed deep disappointment in the political class which has failed them consistently.

Some of those who refused to come to vote explained that they wish to send a strong message to politicians that they will not get the votes anymore.



# IMF pats Gov't on the back

“Tight monetary policy, much improved public financial management, domestic revenue mobilization, and zero central bank financing have supported the administration's efforts to achieve price and exchange rate stability” says the International Monetary Fund in its first and second review of the country's Extended Credit Facility (ECF).

The IMF has given the Liberian Government an instant US\$38 Million for meeting the conditions set out under the program.

The First and second reviews part of conditions set under the extended credit Facility arrangement, request for waivers of Non observance of

and Development (PAPD).

To this the IMF notes that restoring macroeconomic stability, providing a foundation for sustainable inclusive growth, and addressing weaknesses in governance remain the main objectives of this program.

## Program status

The IMF's Executive Board approved a four-year arrangement under the ECF (60 percent of quota) in December 2019.

The Board also approved, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, debt relief under the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (4.5 percent of quota) in April 2020 and a disbursement under the Rapid Credit Facility (RCF) (14 percent of quota) in June 2020.

## Program performance

notable progress was made on several others.

Meanwhile, the IMF notes that to further strengthen program performance, Liberian authorities have implemented key measures as prior actions, including adopting a FY2021 budget in line with program parameters and clearing all debt service arrears, among other measures.

## Risks to the program

According to the IMF report, risks are high despite significant control measures built into prior actions and PCs.

It opines that the main risks are a worse- and longer-than-anticipated impact of COVID-19; slippage from fiscal spending pressures; re-emergence of U.S. dollar



performance criteria and Modification of performance criteria

The Liberian Government requested for a waiver for nonobservance of the end December 2019 and end-June 2020.

The IMF said the policy decision by the government helped to preserve the purchasing power of the poor who were the most affected by the high inflation environment at the program's inception.

According to the IMF, the Liberian Government has considered bringing the ECF-supported program back on track of utmost importance and are committed to their development plan, the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity

According to the IMF, Three out of six end-2019 performance criteria (PCs) were not met.

In particular, it says, the PC on net international reserves (NIR) was missed by a large margin due to higher foreign exchange intervention than programmed and U.S. dollar liquidity assistance to the banking sector.

The report further notes that three of the six end-June 2020 PCs were not met as the impact of the pandemic made the PC targets no longer feasible nor appropriate.

However, it reveals that two structural benchmarks (SBs) were met; four were not met, as the pandemic further strained implementation capacity.

Even so, the report argues that one of the four was implemented with a delay and

liquidity needs in the banking sector; and re-emergence of Liberian dollar banknote shortages.

But it notes that fiscal authorities' efforts are focused on improving fiscal cash management and control and mobilizing domestic revenue, with the objective of financing vast development needs and better protecting the poor.

It further points out that the central bank is rebuilding confidence in the banking sector by addressing the root cause of the U.S. dollar liquidity needs that emerged last year and ensuring adequate supply of Liberian dollar banknotes.

While noting the central bank's commitment to rebuilding NIR to reduce vulnerability to external shocks, the report points out the comprehensive resolution adopted by the Liberian Government to fight corruption, which is an important milestone whose effective implementation is vital.

# Defeated Senators

Starts from back page

the 15 senators that sought reelection only two returned to the Capitol - Nimba County Senator Prince Johnson and Bong County Senator Jewel Howard Taylor, now Vice President of the Republic of Liberia.

The 11 senators that were massively whipped in their respective counties include; Bomi County Senator Sando Johnson, who lost to Representative Edwin Melvin Snowe; Bong County Henry Yallah of the ruling CDC lost to outgoing Deputy Speaker Prince Moya and Independent Senator Oscar Cooper of Margibi County was defeated by former Speaker Emmanuel James Nuquay, and has made a successful return.

Others are: Lofa County incumbent Senator George Tengbeh from the CDC, lost to former Defense Minister Brownie Samukai; Thomas Grupee of Nimba County, bowed to Representative Jeremiah Koug from the Movement for Democracy and Reconstruction of Senator Prince Yormie Johnson, while Dallas Gueh of Rivercess County fell to former journalist Wellington Geevon Smith; incumbent Senator ArmahJallah is being ousted in Gbarpolu County by a female candidate BotoeKenneh, while the shortest-served Senator

Victor Watson was whipped by opposition CPP's Simeon Taylor. Senator Watson only served the Liberian Senate for about nine months.

In southeast Liberia, Senator Mathew Jay of River Gee was defeated by former Lone Star soccer star Jonathan Sewgbe alias "Boy Charles" in Rivergee County, while Grand Kru 'bookman', Doctor/Senator Peter Coleman was defeated by Nathaniel Bahway of the opposition Liberia National Union, and Maryland County Senator H. Dan Morais was terribly whipped by NPP's national chairman and former Representative James Biney.

Employees and eyewitnesses who watched the scenes said staffers of departing senators under direct mandate were seen pulling rugs from the floors, as the materials were hurriedly loaded on un-plated pickups that were brought on the grounds of the Capitol.

Historically, following legislative elections, the United States Aids for International Development (USAID) and International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES) would renovate the Capitol, but it's not clear whether these institutions are prepared to underwrite such cost like in the past. **-Editing by Jonathan Browne**

# Weah honors

Cont'd from page 7

commendable, personal and constructive engagements towards peace - building and dialogue among state actors and the civil society.

Further reading a citation for Dr. Kingsley Okpoku - Amaning, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Liberia, the Chief of Protocol of Liberia says the UN Envoy was posted in Liberia in September 2019 as Resident Coordinator of the UN System.

Since that period, the government says Dr. Amaning has rendered enormous and

invaluable services to the nation and its people in providing support for the enhancement of the national development programs and projects.

Responding to the honors bestowed upon them by the Liberian Government, the two envoys in separate remarks express profound gratitude to the government and people of Liberia for conferring the national honors on them in recognition of their services to Liberia.



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# Defeated Senators loot Capitol



By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor

**D**efeated senators from the December 08, 2020 Special Senatorial elections have embarked on a looting spree at the Capitol precisely, wing of the Liberian Senate.

Since early last week, defeated senators and staffers trooped on the grounds of the Capitol, collecting materials, including office desks, chairs,

stationeries, television sets, air conditioners, wall fans, rugs, and anything that came their way.

Most of the defeated senators were occupants of the newly constructed annex by the Chinese where furniture used in those offices are donations from the Chinese government. But the defeated senators are leaving no stone unturned in their quest to take along public properties as they leave power.

Of the 14 senators that went for reelections, the Liberian people only maintain three; the rest were massively defeated at the ballot box in their respective counties.

In contemporary Liberian legislative history, voters are noted for replacing lawmakers during every election year. During the 2014 Special Senatorial election, of

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 11

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