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# Continental News

## Egypt's Suez Canal blocked by huge container ship

A giant container ship the length of four football pitches has become wedged across Egypt's Suez Canal, blocking one of the world's busiest trade routes.

Dozens of vessels are stuck, waiting for rescue boats to free the 400m-long (1,312ft) ship, which was knocked off course by strong winds.

Egypt has reopened the canal's older channel to divert some traffic until the grounded ship can move again.

The blockage sent oil prices climbing on international markets. About 12% of global trade passes through the Suez Canal, which connects the Mediterranean to the Red Sea and provides the shortest sea link between Asia and Europe.

The Ever Given, registered in Panama, was bound for the port city of Rotterdam in the Netherlands from China and was passing northwards through the canal on its way to the Mediterranean. The 200,000 tonne ship, built in 2018 and operated by

Taiwanese transport company Evergreen Marine, ran aground and became lodged sideways across the waterway at about 07:40 local time (05:40 GMT) on Tuesday.

At 400m long and 59m wide, the ship has blocked the path of other vessels which are now trapped in lines in both directions.

The company that manages the container ship, Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement (BSM),

has denied earlier reports that the ship had already been partially refloated.

In a statement, it said its "immediate priorities are to safely re-float the vessel and for marine traffic in the Suez Canal to safely resume". Experts have warned the process could take several days. Reuters, quoting local sources, says there are at least 30 ships blocked to the north of the Ever Given, and

three to the south. Evergreen Marine said the ship was "suspected of being hit by a sudden strong wind, causing the hull to deviate... and accidentally hit the bottom and run aground".

BSM confirmed on Wednesday that all crew were "safe and accounted for", with no reports of injuries.

Eight tug boats are working to refloat the ship, and diggers on the ground have been removing sand from where it is wedged into the side of the canal bank.

Dr Sal Mercogliano, a maritime historian based in the US state of North Carolina, told the BBC that incidents such as this were rare, but could have "huge ramifications for global trade".

Fears that the blockage could tie up shipments of crude oil caused prices to rise

by 4% on international markets on Wednesday, Reuters reported.

The Kpler energy intelligence service said that more than 20 oil tankers carrying crude and refined products were affected by the jam. "This is the largest vessel ever to go aground in the Suez Canal," he said, adding that the ship got lodged in the embankment and would have lost power and its ability to steer. "If they are unable to pull her free... in a high tide, they are going to have to start removing cargo."

Julianna Cona, who says she is on board another ship located directly behind the Ever Given, wrote on Instagram: "Ship in front of us ran aground while going through the canal and is now stuck sideways looks like we might be here for a little bit..." BBC



The giant ship is causing a traffic jam in one of the world's busiest waterways

## Gay man fights to get Namibia to recognise his twins

A Namibian high court is to decide whether a gay man can return home with his twin daughters, who were born to a surrogate mother in neighbouring South Africa.

Phillip Lühl says his daughters are stateless after

Namibia's Ministry of Home Affairs refused to issue emergency travel authorisation papers for them last week.

Under South Africa's surrogacy laws, a child born to a surrogate mother takes the citizenship of its parents.

In this case, the twins' South African birth certificates recognise Mr Lühl and his Mexican husband, Guillermo Delgado, as the parents.

In a sworn affidavit, Mr Lühl says the home affairs ministry asked him to prove that the children were his.

He believes this was done because of his same-sex marriage, a move he believes is discriminatory.

Moreover, he says, the Namibian constitution does not require a biological link for citizenship by descent between parents and their children.

Same-sex relationships are illegal in Namibia, though those involved in one are not prosecuted.

There are also no specific legal guidelines regarding surrogacy in Namibia.

Activists have planned a march outside the high court on Thursday to protest at what they say is inequality against members of LGBTQ community. BBC



The twins were born in Durban to a surrogate mother on 13 March 2021

## Key Mozambique gas hub 'under attack by gunmen'



A rice paddy near Palma, where large gas deposits have been found offshore, pictured in 2017 before the insurgency began

Gunmen have attacked Mozambique's northern town of Palma, which is close to a multi-billion dollar gas project led by French oil giant Total, sources say.

The raid comes on the day it was announced that construction would soon resume on the scheme. Work was halted in December because of insecurity blamed on the Islamist insurgency in the north of country which began in 2017. Automatic gunfire could be heard in the town and then communication was cut off, Reuters quotes sources telling Portugal's state news agency Lusa.

A security source told the AFP news agency that troops were fighting insurgents.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been uprooted by the violence in northern Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province. Infamous for beheading residents in the resource-rich area, the jihadists have also managed to take control of towns in the last year.

These are used as transit points for goods and workers related to the gas developments, Reuters reports.

Many firms have moved into the region hoping to cashing in on one of the biggest gas finds in decades, it says. BBC

# EDITORIAL

## Making President Weah “happy in 2023”

**PRESIDENT GEORGE MANNEH** Weah heard the message loudly and clearly from the people of Bomi County: They are ready to make the President happy in 2023, the next presidential election. Mr. Weah who began the second leg of his nationwide tour to Bomi on Monday this week, is reading and deciphering the message that would perhaps resonate in his mind throughout on his way to 2023.

**“MR. PRESIDENT, THE** people of Bomi County are reliable people. When they give you their word, go and sleep on it. When they say they are for you, they are for you. They don't play games”, said Bomi County Senator Edwin Melvin Snowe, Jr. in welcome remarks.

A former Montserrado District #6 lawmaker, Snowe migrated to Bomi in 2017 and won a seat in the House before subsequently getting elected senator in December last year.

**HOWEVER, HE REMINDED** President Weah that whatever promises he (Weah) makes to the people of Bomi, they should be fulfilled because the people will judge him in 2023 by his deeds, rather than his words.

A seasoned politician would understand this, and President Weah is not only a politician, but leader of the 4.5 million people of Liberia. A key focus of his government is bettering the lives of citizens thru development.

**SO, HE KNOWS** what's up in Bomi: Meet the people's needs and get their votes at the ballot box for a second term in office. This is as crystal clear as the sunny sky.

**THE PEOPLE OF** Bomi County thru Senator Snowe have spoken their mind to the President. It is for Mr. Weah to remain engaged, not only with that County, but the entire 15 political subdivisions like he is doing currently.

**IF THE PRESIDENT'S** nationwide tour has paid off, citizens in the southeastern region are living evidence. Today, they enjoy electricity and street lights for the first time in many years. Not only that, the President broke grounds for various projects in counties visited during the first leg of his tour last month.

**ON THIS SECOND** leg of the tour, he has already promised to electrify Tubmanburg, Bomi County and elsewhere. If this is what Snowe was referring to, then he should go sleep, because this President does not promise and fail to execute. Politics aside, he is a man of his word.

**THE EVIDENCE IS** there, from the tuition-free program at the University of Liberia and all other public tertiary intuitions across the country, payment of both WASSEC and WAEC fees for 12th and 9th graders to the 14th Military Hospital and road projects, among others, President Weah continues to prove that he is a 'talk and do President.'

**THE PEOPLE OF** Bomi County have no cause to worry about execution of promises. They should consider everything President Weah has promised in the county done far ahead of 2023. But they equally have a challenge to live up to their commitment to make him happy come 2023.

# COMMENTARY

By Shlomo Ben-ami

## Resolving the Iran Conundrum

**T**EL AVIV - Former US President Donald Trump's “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran utterly failed to enhance regional or global security. His successor, Joe Biden, must not make the same mistake.

The centerpiece of Trump's Iran policy was his unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action - widely known as the Iran nuclear deal - in 2018. This move, directly and aggressively promoted by Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, enabled the US to re-impose severe sanctions on Iran.

At the time, Iran was in full compliance with the JCPOA's conditions, and it remained in compliance for a full year after Trump's decision took effect, to give Europe a chance to uphold its pledge to bypass US sanctions. But Europe didn't follow through, so Iran began to break the rules.

Now, as an outgoing deputy chief of Mossad recently noted, the situation is worse than it was when the JCPOA was signed. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken believes that Iran is only months away from being able to produce enough fissile material to build a nuclear weapon. If the country continues to raise limits imposed by the JCPOA, it could get there in “a matter of weeks.”

And yet, far from learning its lesson, Israel - together with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates - wants Biden to maintain Trump's failed policy. In January, Israel's military chief, Lieutenant General Aviv Kochavi, warned the Biden administration against rejoining the JCPOA, even if its terms were toughened. He also announced that Israeli forces are stepping up preparations for possible offensive action against Iran this year.

For Iran's neighbors, a US-Iran détente that does not address the Islamic Republic's ballistic-missile program and support for proxies across the Middle East is a nightmare scenario. They fear that once tensions with Iran are defused, the US is likely to shift its focus away from the Middle East. The forthcoming Global Posture Review, now being prepared by US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, will likely reaffirm this prospect.

Against this background, it would be unwise to pursue French President Emanuel Macron's suggestion that Saudi Arabia and other regional actors be involved in any new negotiations about the JCPOA. Of course, Saudi Arabia - which, along with the UAE, has demanded the Gulf states' involvement - welcomed Macron's call. But, as Iran recognizes, this is a sure route to diplomatic failure and the perpetuation of conflict.

Without these countries acting as spoilers, there is a chance of success. To be sure, domestic politics will limit Iran's ability to accept changes to the original agreement. Years of devastating sanctions - together with America's assassination of General Qassem Suleimani, Iran's most powerful military commander, in January 2020 and Israel's covert operations inside the country - have boosted Iran's hawks, who performed strongly in last year's parliamentary election.

In fact, days after the Suleimani strike, Iran launched missiles at US forces in Iraq, wounding more than 100 troops. Similar rocket attacks were launched this month, following US strikes on Iran-backed militias at the Syria-Iraq border. This, together with persistent attacks on Saudi Arabia by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels, suggests that Iran has no intention of allowing the showdown over the JCPOA to hamper its regional power plays.

All great revolutions aspire to secure their legacy through expansion. For Iran, the imperative is to protect the Islamic Republic's credibility not only among its citizens, but also among the proxies that channel its influence in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. That is why so many powerful voices in Iran will oppose returning even to the 2015 agreement: nuclear capabilities are regime insurance. The US doesn't wage wars against nuclear powers.

Yet Iran has hardly shut the door on the JCPOA. On the contrary, it recently signaled its enduring willingness to compromise, by agreeing to hold for three months recordings from monitoring equipment installed at nuclear sites by the International Atomic Energy Agency. If the US rolls back sanctions within that timeframe, the recordings will be released. (Iran had previously decided that, unless US sanctions were lifted by February 21, intrusive checks of its nuclear sites would be banned.)

The Biden administration should use this window of opportunity to secure a straightforward agreement: the US lifts sanctions in exchange for Iran's compliance with JCPOA restrictions on its nuclear activities. This would significantly bolster the moderate President Hassan Rouhani's position vis-à-vis his hardline challenger, Hossein Dehghan, in this June's presidential election.

But this would not be enough to mitigate the risk of a region-wide conflagration. For that, the US would have to negotiate a “phase two” agreement that addresses Iran's ballistic-missile program and support for non-state actors across the Middle East, in addition to the JCPOA's “sunset clause,” which would lift restrictions on Iran's nuclear enrichment program after 2025.

Given China's massive investments in - and energy dependence on - the Middle East, it could be a useful ally in this effort. Already, China has proposed establishing a designated forum, in which Persian Gulf countries can address regional security issues, including compliance with the JCPOA.

There is reason to think that Saudi Arabia and the UAE - which, despite their large military budgets, cannot afford a full-scale war with Iran - would be willing to reach some kind of negotiated regional settlement within such a forum. As both countries set their sights on nuclear power, a non-proliferation scheme may also be a possibility.

Israel, however, would be excluded from this forum. In any case, it is highly unlikely to engage in negotiations with Iran. Responsibility for reining it in thus falls to the US. To that end, Biden should address Israel's security concerns and expand the multilateral process to address Israel's core strategic interests in Syria and Lebanon.

**New Dawn**  
FULLY INDEPENDENT

# OPINION

By Jeffrey Frankel

## Biden's Sensible Stimulus

**C**AMBRIDGE - The United States and the world entered recession a year ago. Normally, economists can't predict the onset of a downturn. But because this recession stemmed from the COVID-19 pandemic, they could reliably discern its beginnings without waiting for the standard economic indicators.

By the end of the second quarter of 2020, US GDP had plunged by a record 11%, taking the economy from an estimated 1% above potential output at the end of 2019 to a level 10% below it. Forecasters now expect such rapid growth in 2021 that GDP will return to its pre-pandemic peak very soon. By 2022, it will probably be well above potential. The global economy is also expected to recover, though not as rapidly as that of the US.

Some now warn that the US economy could overheat. Given this possibility, is President Joe Biden providing too much stimulus with his \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, enacted earlier this month?

After all, the rosy forecasts for the US economy reflect not only the ongoing vaccine rollout, but also the release of pent-up demand for goods and services. American households saved an estimated \$1.5 trillion of the government transfers that Congress approved a year ago, and appear keen to spend some of it as soon as they can. Moreover, the monetary easing that the US Federal Reserve introduced in spring 2020 has lowered short-term interest rates to zero, and Fed Chair Jerome Powell has repeatedly pledged to leave rates at that level for several years.

A third factor turbocharging demand is the recently renewed fiscal stimulus - not only the Biden package, but also the \$0.9 trillion in outlays that Congress approved in December. And the Biden administration plans a fourth boost to demand through increased infrastructure investment spending. No wonder, then, that Fed officials on March 17 hiked their projections for US growth in 2021, to 6.5%. The OECD has done the same.

The basis of the overheating assessments is simple enough. Let's say that federal government outlays in 2021 exceed last year's by \$1.9 trillion, equivalent to about 9% of the \$22 trillion US economy. With interest rates fixed at zero, the Keynesian multiplier could be as high as 1.5. But when additional government spending takes the form of income transfers, only the part of the increase in disposable income that households actually consume enters the demand stream. Households usually save some, as they certainly did in 2020.

So, assume a multiplier of one. In that case, a fiscal stimulus equal to 9% of GDP results in a 9% output increase. Given that US economic output was an estimated 3% below potential at the end of 2020, a 9% boost would put GDP about 6% above potential.

Some economists, most notably former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers, support the basic idea of Biden's relief program but think it's too big, warning of rising inflation next year. Financial markets have reacted, too: the interest rate on ten-year Treasury bonds has now risen to 1.7%, up from 0.9% since January.

The counterargument is that we don't really know the level of potential output, and are perhaps underestimating it. For example, some have questioned whether the US economy in 2018-19 was really performing above potential after all, given that inflation rose to only 2.3% in 2019 despite the unemployment rate falling as low as 3.5%.

But a likelier explanation for the small rise in inflation in the pre-pandemic period is what economists call a flat Phillips curve. In other words, variations in US employment and output have only small effects on wage and price inflation. Before the puzzle of why inflation did not rise more than it did in 2018-19, there was the puzzle of why it did not fall more than it did in 2010-15, in the aftermath of the Great Recession, when unemployment was coming down only slowly from its 10% peak.

So, although US output growth is likely to be above potential next year, a relatively flat Phillips curve implies that inflation is unlikely to rise inordinately. In fact, the Fed would actively welcome a small pickup in price growth.

To be sure, providing so much stimulus may have other downsides. The US national debt is the highest it has been since 1945, relative to GDP, and will become less sustainable if interest rates rise. Money-financed expansion risks fueling asset bubbles. The trade deficit is bound to increase, which could exacerbate protectionism. And if the sky's the limit on spending, some of the money could be wasted.

But Biden's advisers are clearly trying to ensure that America doesn't repeat the mistake of 2009, when President Barack Obama's \$800 billion stimulus - though big by historical standards - was too small and short-lived to enable the economy to recover fully after the global financial crisis. Although the Great Recession ended almost as soon as Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act took effect, the subsequent recovery was too slow.

It is not clear that the insufficient size of the 2009 stimulus was really the Obama administration's fault (unless, perhaps, Obama erred in seeking a modicum of bipartisanship). Administration officials would argue that they got the biggest stimulus through Congress that was politically feasible, given Republican opposition.

It may be off-limits to say it was American voters who made a mistake. But many reflexively blamed the weakness of the 2009-10 recovery on Obama and the Democrats, and gave the Republicans control of the House of Representatives in the 2010 midterm elections - thus enabling the GOP to block further measures to boost the economy.

America did indeed err in 2009-10 in limiting the size and duration of the fiscal expansion. Regardless of where precisely one locates that mistake, Biden is right to make sure it isn't repeated now.

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# O-P-E-D

By Javier Solana

## Antifragile Europe

**M**ADRID - The word "resilience" has been used a dizzying number of times since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared a year ago. Most interpret resilience to mean the opposite of fragility - the most that many families and businesses can hope for in these unfortunate times. But as a collective aim, resilience lacks ambition. The true antonym of fragility is something bolder, and Europe in particular can and should go further in pursuing it.

In his 2012 book *Antifragile: Things that Gain from Disorder*, Nassim Nicholas Taleb points out that "the resilient resists shocks and stays the same," whereas "the antifragile gets better." The concept reminds us of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's popular adage, "What doesn't kill me makes me stronger." Referencing this aphorism may seem somewhat frivolous, given the pandemic's human toll and the enormous suffering it has caused. However, its logic is clearly applicable to certain contexts.

Our immune system, for example, operates in precisely this manner, allowing vaccines to stimulate the production of antibodies by using an infectious agent. In terms of public policy, our health systems can be expected to emerge stronger from the pressure they are currently under, eventually attracting more resources and making better use of them. And, beyond national borders, Nietzsche's adage rings true for some multi-level governance structures, such as the European Union.

Historically, the European integration project has been forged blow by blow, with most difficulties becoming lessons learned. In the decade or so before the pandemic, the EU experienced one "existential" crisis after another: the Great Recession, the euro crisis, the migration crisis, and then Brexit. The EU not only survived this volatile decade, but did so by deepening its integration - a fact that is often overlooked.

The bloc should respond in the same way to the COVID-19 crisis, which will be with us for a long time. It has already managed to lay solid foundations. Although the EU's deficiencies have been exposed, and its management of the pandemic has been far from flawless, we should recognize that European leaders have broken some important taboos. In particular, when the pandemic struck, few analysts could have guessed that the bloc would agree on large-scale joint debt issuance to finance grants to recession-hit member states.

COVID-19 has highlighted the EU's need for more safeguards. We saw this at the beginning of the pandemic, when a scarcity of essential medical supplies fractured intra-European solidarity. We are also seeing it now, as supply problems hamper the rollout of vaccines across the bloc. Although the EU can boast of having financed the development of the successful Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine (the German company BioNTech, founded by a Turkish-German couple, received considerable EU funding), it lacked assertiveness in other phases of the process. Establishing a European Health Union will help the bloc to correct these shortcomings and mitigate future risks.

The same reasoning applies to many other areas. Initiatives such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation have already begun to address the EU's excessive fragmentation in terms of security and defense. Since US President Joe Biden took office, some have again argued that this focus runs the risk of unnecessarily hampering Europe's security cooperation with the United States, especially within NATO. But shoring up Europe's own defensive capacities - thereby making it a more trustworthy and less dependent ally - was essential before the election of Donald Trump and still is now. The benefits will resonate on both sides of the Atlantic.

Likewise, the EU is attempting to improve its position in the global technology race by intensifying efforts in critical sectors such as artificial intelligence and microchips. As for the green energy transition, the bloc should explore other industrial development initiatives along the lines of the European Battery Alliance.

In the financial sector, a European capital market is slowly starting to emerge. And on trade, the EU would enlarge its room for maneuver if it could secure a more prominent role for the euro in the international monetary system. This would allow EU countries to protect themselves from the application of extraterritorial sanctions, which interfere with commercial activity by jeopardizing access to other countries' financial systems and currencies.

All of these proposals could fall under the concept of "strategic autonomy" that has become a staple of European policy discussions. Unfortunately, however, this term has caused misunderstanding and disagreement. To facilitate consensus, therefore, it might be better to focus less on the term and more on the two main axioms that it aims to synthesize. On one hand, the EU clearly cannot renounce multilateral cooperation, which is in the European project's DNA and thus central to how the bloc projects itself externally. On the other hand, it is equally evident that the EU must have the will and capacity to establish and pursue its priorities in a self-sufficient manner.

Ultimately, we Europeans must aspire to live by our own norms, which would amount to embracing autonomy in its precise etymological sense. It would be paradoxical, therefore, if the measures outlined above were to run counter to those very norms. To put it bluntly, the EU must not turn toward protectionism or take steps that seriously hinder free competition among European businesses. Moreover, Europe can in many cases strengthen the security of its supplies through diversification rather than relocating production.

Once the pandemic is over, the EU will continue to confront longer-term battles. Among other things, its survival as a first-rank global political actor is at stake, and neither Europe's demographic decline nor the current erosion of multilateralism worldwide will help in that regard.

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## ARTICLE

## ARTICLE

# Improving Hong Kong's Electoral System to Ensure the Stability and Long-term Development of "One Country, Two Systems"

By H.E. Ren Yisheng, Ambassador of China to Liberia

Not long ago, the Fourth Session of China's 13th National People's Congress (NPC, China's top legislature), passed the "Decision of the National People's Congress on Improving the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's Electoral System" with a high number of votes. This is another major move taken by the State to improve the legal and political system of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HSAR) following the enactment and implementation of the "Law on the Maintenance of National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China." I would like to elaborate on the following points.

1. There are obvious loopholes and shortcomings in the current election system of the HKSAR, and necessary measures must be taken to amend and improve it.

Hong Kong has been China's territory since ancient times. After its return to the motherland in 1997, Hong Kong was re-incorporated into the national governance system. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Basic Law of the HKSAR of the PRC jointly constitute the constitutional foundation of the HKSAR.

However, judging from the practice since its return to the motherland for more than 20 years, Hong Kong's current electoral system has relatively obvious defects and problems. In recent years, especially since the "Extradition Law Amendment Bill Incident" occurred in Hong Kong in 2019, anti-China forces and local radical separatist forces have used loopholes in Hong Kong's current election system to enter the governance structure of the SAR. Through the HKSAR election platform, the Legislative Council and the district council meeting platform, or using the status of relevant public officials, they openly advocated "Hong Kong independence" and other propositions, strenuously paralyzed the operation of the Legislative Council of the HKSAR, obstructed the HKSAR government's administration according to law, and resisted central governance, even collided with external hostile forces in an attempt to seize the power of governance in Hong Kong. Some foreign and overseas forces have also openly interfered in Hong Kong affairs through legislative, administrative and other channels including consular institutions in Hong Kong and non-governmental organizations, brutally imposed so-called "sanctions" on relevant personnel in my country, and brazenly supported and provided a protective umbrella for Hong Kong's anti-China forces.

These actions and activities have seriously challenged the bottom line of the principle of "one country, two systems", severely damaged Hong Kong's constitutional order and the rule of law, severely endangered national sovereignty, security, and development interests, severely undermined the overall stability of Hong Kong society, and harmed the well-being of Hong Kong people.



Based on the actual situation in Hong Kong, the NPC improved the electoral system of the SAR to effectively eliminate hidden dangers and risks in the system and mechanism, ensure that the HKSAR is governed by law and effective governance, and that the practice of "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong always moves in the right direction.

2. The central government leads the improvement of the HKSAR's electoral system, which has unquestionable legitimacy, rationality, and legitimacy.

The HKSAR is an inseparable part of the PRC. It is a local administrative region of the PRC that enjoys a high degree of autonomy and is directly under the Central People's Government. The central government has the power to govern Hong Kong as well as the power to lead and decide on the development of the political system. Since the return of Hong Kong, the Central Government has always been the leader and decision maker in Hong Kong's democratic development and its electoral system improvement, while Hong Kong has been a participant. It is the constitutional power that the central government enjoys in accordance with the Constitution and the Basic Law to determine its electoral system based on the actual situation of Hong Kong, and it is also the constitutional responsibility of the central government.

In the face of serious loopholes and risks in the current election system of the HKSAR, the Central Government improved the electoral system in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Constitution and the Hong Kong Basic Law to plug the loopholes in the system, to ensure that Hong Kong's democratic system develops healthier and smoother within the framework of the "one country, two systems" and on the track of the Constitution and the Basic Law, and to safeguard national sovereignty, security, and development interests. It is in full compliance with the relevant provisions of the

Constitution and the Basic Law, which is unquestionable.

3. Only by insisting on "Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong" with patriots as the main body can ensure the stability and long-term development of "one country, two systems".

It is a common practice in the world to make strict requirements on the patriotic position and relevant political qualifications of governors. Adhering to "patriots administering Hong Kong" is to ensure that Hong Kong after the return to the motherland will be governed by patriots, and the power of the HKSAR must be in the hands of patriots.

Hong Kong is in a critical period of chaos and governance. Only by fully implementing the fundamental principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong" and ensuring that the HKSAR is governed by law and effectively governed, can Hong Kong be possible to settle disputes and work together to solve a series of deep-seated problems in economic and social development in order to achieve long-term prosperity and stability. Only when the central government's comprehensive governance over the SAR is effectively implemented and the constitutional order established by the Constitution and the Basic Law is effectively maintained can "one country, two systems" ensure stability and long-term development.

China urges some foreign countries and foreign forces to abide by international law and basic norms of international relations and stop interfering in Hong Kong affairs and China's internal affairs. We have every reason to believe that with the support and participation of the majority of patriots, Hong Kong will have a better tomorrow!

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# First lady interacting with kids in Tubmanburg, and team working to light up Tubmanburg



# Weah in Gbarpolu County



# Français

## Traoré Bakary : « La guerre civile en Sierra Leone est la fille de la guerre civile libérienne »

Il y a trente ans jour pour jour démarrait l'une des guerres civiles les plus violentes de l'histoire d'Afrique de l'Ouest, la guerre civile sierra-léonaise. Les rebelles du Front révolutionnaire uni multiplient, au cours de ce conflit, les exactions contre les populations civiles. Toute cette journée, RFI évoque cette guerre terrible et de la façon dont les populations sierra-léonaises se reconstruisent depuis et rebâtissent leur pays. Mais comment tout cela a-t-il démarré ? L'historien Traoré Bakary est enseignant-chercheur à l'université Félix-Houphouët-Boigny à Abidjan, spécialiste des conflits africains. Il est l'invité de Laurent Correau.

RFI : Replantons peut-être brièvement le décor pour bien comprendre ce qui se passe à partir de 1991 en Sierra Leone. Qui se bat dans cette guerre et pourquoi ?

Traoré Bakary : En 1989, il y a une guerre civile qui éclate au Liberia. Cette guerre est animée par Charles Taylor et les troupes ouest-africaines interviennent pour mettre fin à la guerre. Il se trouve que ces troupes-là, c'est-à-dire l' E c o m o g

[Economiccommunity of West Africanstatescease-fire monitoring group] ont une base aérienne qui est à Freetown. Et la pression de l'Ecomog étant forte, Charles Taylor va susciter la mise en place du RUF, Front révolutionnaire uni, pour diminuer la pression militaire de l'Ecomog sur ses troupes. Il s'agit de disperser les énergies de l'Ecomog entre le Liberia et la Sierra Leone. On a observé la participation de mercenaires Burkinabè, de mercenaires guinéens et surtout libériens. On peut même dire que la guerre

civile en Sierra Leone est la fille de la guerre civile libérienne.

Et donc en janvier 1999, les rebelles de ce RUF entrent dans la capitale Freetown dans laquelle ils sèment le chaos. C'est ce qu'on appelle l'opération « No living thing », littéralement « Plus rien de vivant ». Qu'est-ce qui se passe à ce moment-là ?

L'arrivée même du RUF dans la capitale faisait que les gens f u y a i e n t d é j à . Malheureusement, ceux qui

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9



## Liberté D'expression : La Police Aux Trousses D'un Militant De L'opposition

Mo Ali, ex-secrétaire général du Unity Party, a été questionné ce lundi 22 mars à Monrovia par la police. En cause, un post Facebook de l'opposant que cette dernière lie à l'attaque à la bombe du domicile du président de la Commission nationale des élections survenue quelques jours après ladite publication. Le Unity Party quant à lui dénonce des manœuvres

d'intimidation.

C'est porté en triomphe par ses militants et sympathisants que Mo Ali est sorti du siège de la Liberia National Police à Monrovia ce lundi 22 mars 2022. Le secrétaire général du Unity Party, un parti de l'opposition avait rendez-vous avec la police nationale pour une audition. Mo Ali était déjà attendu le 19 mars dernier à la police nationale mais n'a pas daigné se présenter. D'où un mandat d'arrêt lancé contre lui.

En effet, le 1er mars dernier, sur son compte Facebook, l'opposant a posté : « "Dear National Elections Commission (NEC), weunderstand the ploy. But try it and you will see what is gonna be the end result". Traduction : « Chère Commission nationale électorale, nous comprenons le stratagème. Mais essayez et vous verrez quel sera le résultat ». Quelques jours après la publication de cette déclaration sur Facebook, le domicile du président, Joseph Nagbe, tout comme le siège de la Commission nationale électorale seront l'objet d'un attentat à la bombe. Pour la police nationale du Libéria, cette attaque est liée au post Facebook de Mo Ali.

Voilà qui explique l'invitation des autorités sécuritaires à clarifier ses propos. Le Unity Party dénonce une manœuvre d'intimidation ainsi qu'une tentative de museler une voix dissidente au Libéria.

Le post Facebook de Mo Ali faisait allusion à la volonté de la commission électorale de

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9



## Éditorial

### Les médias libériens ont aussi besoin de renforcement des capacités institutionnelles

Au cours des deux dernières décennies, ou plus, des partenaires étrangers ont dépensé des millions de dollars au Libéria pour former des journalistes et des rédacteurs en chef sans penser au renforcement des capacités institutionnelles, qui est un élément clé pour les rendre dynamiques.

De la MINUL en passant par d'autres partenaires au développement internationaux, dont l'IREX et l'Internews, des millions de dollars américains ont été consacrés à la formation, mais malgré l'afflux de fonds venus des organisations locales et internationales, l'impact laisse beaucoup à désirer. La formation à elle seule n'a pas vraiment aidé à renforcer les médias, car le personnel formé professionnellement quitte les maisons de presse pour chercher des pâturages plus verts.

Les médias indépendants en tant qu'entreprise ne fonctionnent pas en vase clos. Il s'appuie sur l'économie pour attirer, maintenir et augmenter les publicités pour sa survie. Mais avec une économie dévastée comme celle que nous avons au Libéria, couplé avec un lectorat médiocre et une diminution des diffusions, les médias sont incapables de payer leurs travailleurs et de les entretenir.

Comme si cela ne suffisait pas, l'impact du COVID-19 sur les institutions médiatiques s'est fait ressentir sévèrement.

Avec cet environnement économique épouvantable, les médias ont été abandonnés au point de périr. C'est au fait l'une des principales raisons pour lesquelles le professionnalisme en matière de journalisme a cédé la place à la médiocrité.

Dans de telles conditions, il faut un changement radical dans la manière dont les fonds destinés à aider les médias libériens devraient être utilisés. Nous suggérons qu'au lieu de dispenser une formation de deux semaines, une semaine ou trois jours aux journalistes, des subventions soient accordées pour permettre aux maisons de presse de renforcer leurs capacités opérationnelles.

Ces subventions devraient être accompagnées de critères que les responsables des médias, y compris les éditeurs, sont tenus de respecter pour en bénéficier. C'est indéniable, certaines institutions médiatiques n'ont pas les moyens pour acheter quotidiennement ne serait-ce du papier journal et faire face à d'autres frais d'exploitation, et encore moins de payer régulièrement le personnel.

Ceci est même aggravé par les retards de paiement des services rendus aux clients, y compris le gouvernement, qui reste le principal annonceur du pays. Les malheurs s'aggravent lorsque des organisations non gouvernementales internationales et d'autres dirigent leur publicité vers le site Web de l'Executive Mansion - le site Web du Président de la République du Libéria prive les institutions médiatiques de revenus publicitaires indispensables.

Et chaque fois qu'il est prêt à payer des frais de publicité, des conditions sont posées, dont être en règle vis-à-vis du fisc. Mais, une entité médiatique en difficulté dans une économie comme la nôtre, où va-t-elle prendre de l'argent pour être à jour avec les impôts ? En tout cas, ce débat est pour un autre jour.

Mais la vérité est que les médias au Libéria ont besoin d'une aide sérieuse. Ils n'ont pas la capacité opérationnelle de fournir le type de services dont le public a besoin. Une subvention douce de partenaires internationaux contribuerait grandement à renforcer l'indépendance des médias pour permettre de jouer son rôle essentiel dans notre régime démocratique.

C'est un idéal que les partenaires au développement des médias doivent prendre en considération pendant que nous travaillons ensemble au renforcement de la presse au Libéria. Nous avons eu une série de programmes de formation professionnelle. Mais en l'absence d'institutions dynamiques, les journalistes tournent le dos à la salle de rédaction pour chercher une vie meilleure.



# Français

## Traoré Bakary :

n'ont pas pu partir ont été pris dans le feu de l'action et ont été les plus grosses victimes. Le RUF s'est attaqué à toutes les populations civiles qui étaient censées soutenir l'Ecomog et le pouvoir en place. Et cela a donné des exactions comme « manches longues, manches courtes ».....« Manches longues, manches courtes », c'est-à-dire des amputations des bras...C'est exact. On peut ajouter aussi les viols et les exécutions sommaires, les assassinats de masse, les incendies des quartiers. En tout cas, on a compté les morts par milliers. Qu'est-ce qui explique ce niveau de violences pendant la guerre civile sierra-léonaise ?

Il y a un sentiment de vengeance à l'égard des troupes nigérianes qui sont accusées d'être des envahisseurs. Il y a le fait que les populations civiles soient accusées de soutenir les troupes nigérianes, mais on peut aussi ajouter à cela la relative jeunesse des combattants qui ont été drogués et qui ont été envoyés comme des chiens de guerre à l'encontre des populations.

Quand et comment prend fin la guerre civile ?

En janvier 1999, le RUF arrive dans les faubourgs de Freetown, et finalement parvient à chasser l'Ecomog et le régime en place dirigé par TejanKabbah. Pendant trois semaines, l'Ecomog va tenter de reprendre la capitale. Cette Ecomog finalement met fin à l'action militaire du RUF qui va se replier à l'est du pays. A force d'attaques et de contre-attaques, il y a un projet de négociations qui est lancé. Et ce projet aboutit à la signature d'abord de la cessation des hostilités, et ensuite à la signature d'un accord de paix en juillet 1999 [les accords de Lomé, signés par Ahmad TejanKabbah et Foday Sankoh sous les auspices de plusieurs chefs d'Etat ouest-africains].

Quel est le rôle que les diamants jouent dans ce conflit

?

Les diamants ont vraiment joué un rôle très important puisqu'ils ont permis de financer les activités militaires des uns et des autres que ce soit du côté gouvernemental ou du côté des rebelles. La conquête des zones diamantifères a aussi cristallisé l'essentiel des affrontements entre le camp gouvernemental et le camp des rebelles, et même quelque fois, entre les rebelles et les forces nigérianes de l'Ecomog. Dans les projets de négociation, on a vu que Foday Sankoh était vraiment accroché aux zones diamantifères. Et il a fallu lui réserver un poste qui allait lui permettre de s'occuper de la gestion de ces diamants.

Quelles ont été les conséquences de ce conflit sur la société sierra léonaise ?

Les premières conséquences sont psychologiques. On a parlé des « manches longues » et des « manches courtes », les cas de viol... les populations ont été marquées à vie. Mais il y a aussi l'éclatement des familles. Donc vraiment, la Sierra Leone est sortie de ce conflit-là avec des conséquences très visibles au niveau social. La fin du conflit va se manifester par la mise en place d'un tribunal, qui va essayer de réparer les effets psychologiques, de juger les auteurs de ces exactions. Les institutions politiques et juridiques n'existent plus. Il va falloir relancer la reconstruction post-crise. Tout est à reconstruire dans le pays.

Et Charles Taylor lui-même a été sanctionné...Charles Taylor a été arrêté finalement et traduit en justice. Foday Sankoh est mort en détention. Il y a quelques anciens rebelles qui se sont reconvertis dans la vie politique, qui ont même participé à des consultations électorales. Mais ce qui est intéressant, c'est comment les Sierra-Léonais arrivent à regarder vers l'avenir, à reconstruire un pays qui était vraiment détruit. Je pense que la Sierra Leone a pu en quelques années solder le passé de la guerre.

## Liberté D'expression :

priver l'ex-ministre de la Défense, Brownie Samukai, de son siège de sénateur du comté de Lofa, suite à une décision de justice condamnant ce dernier à une amende de 1,4 millions de dollars pour détournements de fonds publics.

Le 8 décembre 2020, des élections sénatoriales partielles se sont tenues au

Libéria. Un scrutin pas du tout gai pour le parti au pouvoir qui n'a gagné qu'un seul siège sur les 8 en jeu. D'après l'opposition, le régime de Georges Weah a engagé des manœuvres en vue de reprendre de l'avantage sur l'échiquier politique national, ceci en instrumentalisant la Commission nationale indépendante.

## COMMENTAIRE

Par Shlomo Ben-ami

## Résoudre le dilemme iranien

**T**EL-AVIV - La campagne de « pression maximale » lancée contre l'Iran par l'ancien président des États-Unis Donald Trump a totalement échoué à renforcer la sécurité régionale ou mondiale. Son successeur, Joe Biden, ne doit pas commettre la même erreur.

La clé de voûte de la politique iranienne menée par Trump fut, en 2018, d'avoir unilatéralement retiré les États-Unis du Plan d'action global commun (PAGC-JCPOA) de 2015, plus connu sous le nom d'accord sur le nucléaire iranien. Cette initiative, directement et ardemment encouragée par le Premier ministre israélien Benyamin Nétanyahou, a permis aux États-Unis d'imposer à nouveau à l'Iran de sévères sanctions.

À l'époque, l'Iran respectait pleinement les dispositions du JCPOA, et continua de le faire pendant une année entière après que la décision de Trump prit effet, afin de donner à l'Europe l'opportunité de contourner les sanctions des États-Unis. Mais l'Europe ne parvint pas à traduire ses paroles en actes, et l'Iran commença d'enfreindre les règles.

Aujourd'hui, comme l'a fait remarquer le chef adjoint sortant du Mossad, la situation est pire que lorsque fut signé l'accord. Le secrétaire d'État américain, Anthony Blinken, estime qu'il suffirait de quelques mois pour que l'Iran puisse produire la quantité suffisante de matière fissile nécessaire à la fabrication d'une bombe. Qu'il y parvienne pourrait n'être qu'une « question de semaines », si le pays continue de repousser les limites imposées par le JCPOA.

Et pourtant, loin de tirer les enseignements d'une telle situation, Israël - soutenu par l'Arabie saoudite et les Émirats arabes unis - souhaite voir Biden s'en tenir à la politique de Trump - qui a échoué. Au mois de janvier, le chef d'état-major israélien, le lieutenant général Aviv Kochavi, mettait en garde l'administration Biden contre les dangers qu'il y aurait à rejoindre l'accord, même si les termes en étaient durcis. Il annonçait également que les forces israéliennes intensifiaient leur préparation en vue d'une possible action offensive contre l'Iran, cette année.

Pour les voisins de l'Iran, une détente américano-iranienne qui ne se soucierait ni du programme de missiles balistiques de la République islamique ni du soutien qu'elle accorde dans tout le Moyen-Orient aux forces qui agissent pour son compte serait un scénario de cauchemar. Ils craignent en effet qu'une fois apaisées les tensions avec l'Iran, les États-Unis ne se désintéressent du Moyen-Orient. L'examen de la doctrine de défense, que prépare en ce moment le secrétaire Lloyd Austin, dont les conclusions paraîtront prochainement, renforcera probablement ces inquiétudes.

Dans un tel contexte, il ne serait guère avisé de suivre la suggestion du président français Emmanuel Macron qui propose d'impliquer l'Arabie saoudite et les autres acteurs régionaux dans toute nouvelle négociation du JCPOA. Certes, Riyad - qui a demandé, avec les Émirats, de prendre part au processus - a salué l'invitation de Paris. Mais, comme l'admet Téhéran, ce serait choisir le chemin assuré d'un échec diplomatique et la poursuite du conflit.

Si l'on peut éviter de donner à ces pays les capacités de compromettre les négociations, il est possible de réussir. Les enjeux de politique intérieure limiteront évidemment les capacités de l'Iran d'accepter une évolution des termes de l'accord. Des années de sanctions dévastatrices - auxquelles s'ajoutent l'assassinat par les Américains du général Qassem Suleimani, le chef militaire le plus puissant d'Iran, en janvier 2020, et les opérations clandestines israéliennes à l'intérieur du pays - ont donné des ailes aux faucons iraniens, qui ont obtenu de très bons résultats lors des dernières élections législatives.

En réalité, quelques jours seulement après la frappe contre Suleimani, l'Iran a lancé des missiles sur les forces américaines en Irak, et blessé plus de cent soldats. Des tirs de roquettes ont suivi, de la même façon, ce mois-ci, les frappes américaines contre des milices soutenues par l'Iran à la frontière syro-irakienne. Tout cela, ainsi que la persistance des attaques contre l'Arabie saoudite menées par les rebelles yéménites houthistes eux aussi soutenus par l'Iran, laisse penser que Téhéran n'a nullement l'intention de permettre à l'épreuve de force qui se joue autour du JCPOA d'entraver son jeu de puissance régionale.

Toute grande révolution aspire à inscrire sa postérité dans une forme d'expansion territoriale. Pour l'Iran, il est impératif de protéger la crédibilité de la République islamique non seulement auprès de ses propres citoyens, mais aussi des forces à sa solde, par lesquelles elle exerce son influence en Irak, au Liban, en Syrie et au Yémen. C'est pour cette raison que tant de voix s'élèvent en Iran pour s'opposer à réintégrer l'accord, même aux termes de 2015 : les capacités nucléaires servent d'assurance à un régime. Les États-Unis n'entrent pas en guerre contre des puissances nucléaires.

Pourtant l'Iran n'a pas véritablement fermé la porte au JCPOA. Bien au contraire, il a récemment indiqué qu'il était toujours disposé au compromis en acceptant de conserver pendant trois mois les enregistrements effectués par les appareils de surveillance installés sur les sites nucléaires par l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique. Si les États-Unis lèvent d'ici là les sanctions, les enregistrements seront communiqués. (L'Iran avait auparavant décidé d'interdire les contrôles intrusifs sur ses sites nucléaires, à moins que les sanctions ne soient levées avant le 21 février.)

L'administration Biden devrait saisir l'occasion pour parvenir à un accord très clair : les États-Unis lèvent les sanctions en échange du respect par l'Iran des restrictions à ses activités nucléaires posées par le JCPOA. Ce qui constituerait pour le président modéré Hassan Rohani une aide non négligeable face à son opposant ultra, Hossein Dehgan, lors des élections présidentielles, au mois de juin prochain.

Mais cela ne suffirait pas à faire baisser le risque d'une conflagration régionale. Pour y parvenir, les États-Unis devraient négocier une « seconde phase » de l'accord, qui répondrait aux problèmes que constituent le programme iranien de missiles balistiques et le soutien de la République islamique à un certain nombre d'acteurs non étatiques à travers tout le Moyen-Orient, sans compter la sunset clause du JCPOA, qui permettrait, après 2025, de lever les restrictions imposées au programme nucléaire iranien d'enrichissement de l'uranium.

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# Weah raps up Bomi tour

By Othello B. Garblah

Tubmanburg, Bomi County- President George Weah on Wednesday rapped up his tour of Bomi County with a commitment to construct 2 housing units for nurses at the Government run hospital in Tubmanburg.

The President also donated one vehicle to the

power by solar panel in Tubmanburg on as part of his light up the city project. Similar lightening was also done in Gbama on Wednesday night.

Speaking to hospital officials, Mr. Weah flanked by first lad Clar Weah said the construction of the 20 housing units could begin in less than 24 hours if the land for the project was immediately provided.

these problems to the health authorities at the national level but noting have been done.

President Weah noted that it was just not right for the health workers at the facility to keep silent and not share their problems when their immediate leaders are ignoring them.

"Sometimes don't be afraid, you should take the report to people to see," President Weah said as he bemoaned the conditions of health workers at the government run hospital.

"When something happen, they will not hold you. They will say that the President," he said nothing that this is why it is important for him to be in the know.

Mr. Weah queried the local health officials saying, "Why if we had not stop by that means you would have continue to work under such condition."

However, responding to the vehicle request, President Weah said he hopes they will be able to fuel it adding "everything you ask for has its own responsibility attached."

The President and delegation departed Bomi for Gbama, in Gbarpolu County where he held a town hall meeting and reassured local citizens that the construction of the 52km road corridor between Bomi and Gama is on course. He also visited Lofa Bridge in Grand Capemount and held a town hall meeting in Tahn District.



hospital during a brief stopover for their operations, while First Lady Clar Weah also donated a new vehicle to the Female nurse who moves around Suehn Mecca on bike to help deliver our pregnant mothers.

On Tuesday night Mr. Weah also dedicated streets lights

He made the commitment after listening to the challenges being face by health workers at that particular government run hospital, which ranges from lack of housing, vehicles and other basic necessities that are lacking there.

It appears the local health officials have brought this to

# Liberia doesn't belong to CDCians alone

-CSA tells Chairman Morlu

By Lewis S. Teh

Barley a day following his revocation as at the Ministry of Transport, The Civil Servants Association of Liberia has sharply reacted the chairman of the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change for demanding the revocation of the appointment of a fellow Liberian just because he is not a partisan, saying Liberia doesn't belong to the CDC-led government alone.

The CSA in a interview with reporters Wednesday called on Liberians to stop depoliticizing the Civic Service. The Association through its president Mulbah Johnson notes that it is unfortunate for certain group to think that Liberia belongs to them only.

Reacting to the revocation of Mr. Oliver Dillon's appointment by the Minister of Transport to the post director of ports and border entries, Mr. Johnson laments the actions and attitude of chairman Morlu doesn't speak well for the country's future, stressing that Liberia belongs to every citizens that are qualified and competent to work.

"We are asking our politicians to leave us alone; we want to do our work, the CSA doesn't want to meager itself with political actions." He adds.

He reminds that partisans of CDC alone didn't elect

President Weah into office, but rather every citizens, including Civil Servants who played a cardinal role in Weah's victory in the historic transition that brought the CDC government to power.

"You can't be under the illusion that all CDCians must be employed at all cost; the CSA will further ask you to tap into the private sector to bring in more investments, if you are truly desire of seeing every CDCian employed."

According to him, if Morlu thinks that governmental jobs only belong to partisans then such thought is evil, and a complete witch-hunt from leaders of the ruling party.

"If you think you want to do well for party, then you need to find your own resources, because we think Dillon as a civil servant and citizen has the right to be promoted to any position [that he's qualified for]."

On Monday Transport Minister Samuel Wlue bowed to outcry from CDC chairman Mulbah Morlu, and rescinded the appointment of Oliver Dillon as director of port and border entry.

The decision of the CDC chairman has received widespread public condemnation with citizens citing violation of the 1986 constitution of Liberia which gives every citizen right to work irrespective of political affiliations.

# I stand by my word

--Rep. Francis Nyumalin explains threat to declare elected offices vacant

By Bridgett Milton

Lofa County District 1 Representative Francis Sakila Nyumalin says he stands by his recent statement that the same authority that will nullify Lofa County's decision to elect Brownie Samukai as senator will also be used to nullify all positions for the president, vice president, senators and representatives.

"Any attempt to dissolve the result of Lofa County or nullifying the decision of the people of Lofa County, the authority that will do it, we will use that same authority to nullify all other positions in the country from the President, Vice President, Senator [to the] Representative," Mr. Nyumalin told the Plenary of the House of Representatives during an inquiry Tuesday, 23 March.

The House Plenary has sanctioned the inquiry based on a communication from Montserrado County District



16 Representative Dixon W. Seboe, seeking explanation from Nyumalin on the basis of his statement.

But Nyumalin tells members of the House of Representatives that he has no regret for the statement he made, adding: "I stand by my word."

In Seboe's communication to the House, he alleges that his colleague Nyumalin had asserted in a recording "that if Senator Elect Brownie Samukai is not certificated, all other elected positions from the President to representatives will be

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declared vacant and discussions that will lead to the formation of an interim government will begin."

Further, Seboe narrates that judging from Liberia's history since the 1990s, every situation that led to the formation of an interim government was on the basis of political destabilization and or overthrow of a legitimate sitting government.

"As such it is important that our colleague be made to explain to this plenary how his statement will be implemented," Seboe says, reminding his colleagues that they are national leaders who have followers that can implement whatever they say.

However, Rep. Nyumalin in response to inquiry by his colleagues explains that the letter written by Rep. Seboe has serious misquotation in it, disclosing that his intention is not to form a rebel group or to

go after government.

The Lofa lawmaker explains that if the Supreme Court or the National Elections Commission is used to nullify the result of Samukai, they are going to use the same means to nullify all other elections.

According to Rep. Nyumalin, his statement was very clear and he thought the House would be asking him about the status of the issue with the executive, instead, there is a letter on the floor to investigate him.

House Plenary's inquiry with Rep. Nyumalin comes days after the Lofa County representative was invited by the National Security Agency (NSA) for questioning over the same statement he made on a local radio station.

Meanwhile the communication has been forwarded to the leadership of the House of Representatives.—*Edited by Winston W. Parley*

# Is it Senator Gbotoe Kanneh?

By Winston W. Parley

Liberia's Supreme Court has mandated the National Elections Commission (NEC) to announce the results of the special senatorial election held in Gbarpolu County, over two months after court cases prevented announcement of final results in which female independent candidate Gbotoe Kanneh is presumed to lead unofficial results.

The Supreme Court ruled Wednesday, 24 March reversing a ruling of NEC's Board of Commissioners in which the electoral house sought to conduct a full scale investigation in complaint of election violence.

The ruling is a slap in the face of ruling Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) senatorial candidate and sitting Gbarpolu County Representative Alfred Koiwood whose lawyers had called for a rerun in 13 voting precincts in addition to the disputed area where rerun

Justice that has the sole authority to investigate.

The Supreme Court orders the NEC Board of Commissioners to proceed forthwith to announce the results of the Special Senatorial Election held in Gbarpolu County in keeping with Section 2.9 of the Elections Law.

The Court also orders its Clerk to send a mandate to the NEC to resume jurisdiction over this case.

The court's decision Wednesday followed an intense legal battle that on 16 March when it began querying lawyers over Gbarpolu County's stalled senatorial election, amidst a series of legal actions that had disrupted pronouncement of final results by the NEC since conducting a rerun on 7 January 2021 in a disputed area.

A nationwide election was held on 8 December 2020 for 15 senatorial seats, but electoral violence in Nomodatahum, Gbarpolu County, bordering Sierra Leone, prompted a rerun to be held on 7 January in the

was before the Supreme Court because the NEC went beyond its preliminary findings and announced that it was due to conduct a full scale thorough investigation which the team fears, "may affect the announcement of the results."

Cllr. Arthur T. Johnson, representing sitting Gbarpolu County Representative and senatorial candidate, Alfred Koiwood, said the investigation conducted by the NEC on the election violence in Gbarpolu County will affect the result because there was also complaint from citizens of Gbarpolu in addition to complaint filed by his client.

He claimed that there was a complaint that Madam Kanneh brought in Sierra Leoneans to vote into the elections, adding that when they saw the town filled with strangers when they woke in the morning.

But in a query, Associate Justice Yussif D. Kaba asked Cllr. Johnson as to why he had to bring about complaints from the nine other precincts when he limited his complaint to what transpired in Nomodatahum without mentioning the case from the nine precincts.

In responding, Cllr. Johnson said they called for a rerun for the 13 voting precincts. But Justice Kaba noted that such a call was made without the counsel making any reference to the other places, even though he is praying for the court to order rerun in places he did not reference.

Justice Kaba noted that Cllr. Johnson wanted to further complicate the matter by adding the other nine areas.

However Cllr. Johnson said it is not to complicate the matter, arguing that it was illegal that the NEC had allowed a rerun when there was already a complaint filed before the same commission asking it not to go ahead with the election because there was violence.

According to Cllr. Johnson, the NEC went ahead and summarily dismissed the complaint, which led him to go to the Supreme Court. Cllr. Johnson insisted that no one participated in the preparation for the conduct of the rerun.

In a communication dated 8 January 2021, Associate Justice presiding in Chambers of the Supreme Court of Liberia Madam Sie-A-Nyene G. Yuoh ordered the NEC to halt all actions, pronouncement or announcement on election from affected area (s) of Gbarpolu County, pending the hearing and decision of the

# First Lady raps

Starts from back page

consignment of health packs, each of which contains, sanitary pads, toothpaste, deodorant, hand sanitizer and bath soap.

The Liberian First Lady urged the girls to use the materials to maintain a good personal hygiene.

She also assured them of her commitment to continue to work with them, providing the needed support in various ways possible.

The engagement which

took place at the multipurpose building in Nyela, on the outskirts of Tubmanburg, is part of the First Lady's flagship program, She's You Movement, which seeks to improve the lives of women and girls through empowerment and advocacy for a better and prosperous Liberia.

The forum brought together hundreds of girls from all walks of life, including students, between ages 9 and 19 years.

# Ganta to Saclepea

Starts from back page

meaningful impact on the lives of the Liberian people through the construction of roads and bridges since the company begun its operation in Liberia in 2008.

Mentioning also that the road project will provide short term work opportunity for local residents, including skilled and unskilled workers as a means of generating income for their families.

The company also listed the construction of the Monrovia City Streets, the Vai Town Bridge, Caldwell Road as well as the Red Light to

Gbarnga road projects, which created employment opportunities for scores of Liberians over the last few years.

The document was signed by the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Samuel Tweah; Acting Public Works Minister, Ruth Coker Collins and a representative of CICO at the highway groundbreaking ceremony held on Wednesday, December 2, 2020 in Ganta, while a Chinese Embassy delegation led by Ambassador Ren Yisheng participated in the signing ceremony.



Madam Botoe Kanneh

was held on 7 January this year.

Who becomes the Senator of Gbarpolu County will only be known when the NEC announces its final results from the election held in Gbarpolu. Following the 8 December 2020 polls, Madam Kanneh was said to be in the lead, but a electoral dispute in Nomodatahum bordering neighboring Sierra Leone prompted a rerun in that town.

Without the official results her supporters again claimed she had topped the votes after the 7 January 2021 rerun, but the NEC could not announce official results pending conclusion of election cases filed by the ruling CDC candidate Koiwood.

However the Supreme Court says where a complaint alleges election violence which has [a nature of] criminality as in the instant case, it is the Ministry of

affected area. But final results for 7 January 2021 polls are yet to come out due to legal challenges that have emerged since.

The ruling Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) on behalf of its senatorial candidate Rep. Alfred Koiwood filed the petition before the Supreme Court for the writ of prohibition against the NEC.

Representing Madam Gbotoe Kanneh earlier on 16 March, a team of lawyers which includes Liberia's former Chief Justice Gloria Musu Scott, said "the final result was never announced by NEC."

Madam Gbotoe's team of lawyers contended that there is no way that the 8 December alleged election violence can affect the overall result of the election on grounds that the rerun in Nomodatahum was conducted on 7 January following negotiations and mediations to which both sides had allegedly agreed.

But the team stated that it

complaint filed before the county's Elections Magistrate.

"By directive of Her Honor Sie-A-Nyene G. Yuoh, Associate Justice presiding in Chambers, you are hereby informed to stay all actions/or pronouncement or announcement on the election of the affected area (s) of Gbarpolu County, pending the hearing and decision of the complaint filed before the Elections Magistrate of Gbarpolu County, up to and including the hearing and disposition of appeal by any party even up to the Supreme Court," the order dated 8 January read.

Prior to the court's order, the rerun had already been conducted on 7 January, pending pronouncement of official results when the process was then halted by the Chamber Justice. However unofficial reports appeared to project Madam Kanneh to have maintained her lead over her rival Rep. Alfred Koiwood, though official results are pending the outcome of the election case.

The election violence emerged in Gbarpolu after

angry youth acting on the instructions of the Clan Chief stormed voting centers on Election Day, 8 December and took away the boxes containing ballot papers and other voting materials.

Reports of voters' intimidation flared with many locals reporting the presence of a traditional (country) devil ordered in town by the Clan Chief, a diehard CDC supporter, which prevented many people from accessing the town.

In December, delegates of the main opposition Collaborating Political Parties (CPP) including the party's head of secretariat Cllr. Aloysius Toe were arrested by state security officers in Gbarpolu County, amid continuing electoral violence that had stalled the senatorial election led by female independent candidate Gbotoe Kanneh.

The CPP said its delegation got arrested and detained beyond statutory period when it traveled to the county on a fact-finding mission to possibly lend technical support to Madam Kanneh.

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# First Lady raps on Sexual, Reproductive Health



**F**irst Lady Clar Marie Weah on Wednesday March 24 held an interactive forum to educate adolescent girls on sexual and reproductive health issues in Tubmanburg, Bomi County as part of activities marking the President George Weah's second leg of county tour.

Mrs. Weah stressed that it was important for them know their body well by understanding the various changes, including their menstrual cycle, that will

occur as they grow, and how to respond appropriately.

She disclosed that the lack of such awareness makes adolescent girls and young ladies afraid and confused about what to do as soon as they begin to see their period.

Mrs. Weah recalled experiencing similar situation as a teen because she never had anyone to adequately educate her, and as such she feels obliged to provide them with the requisite information.

Menstruation and the lack of

knowledge and hygienic resources to manage it pose some serious negative consequences on girls' education and Studies show that menstruation is a major cause for girls' early dropout from school, as many of them, being ashamed and sometimes not being able to access sanitary resources, stay home.

According to UNESCO worldwide, 131 million girls are out of school – and 100 million of those are girls of high school age, making girls less likely than boys to graduate from secondary school.

While providing essential health tips and demonstrating how to use sanitary pads, Mrs. Weah told a huge gathering of girls that no one is well placed to educate them other than the First Lady and Mother of the Nation.

Meanwhile, the Mrs. Weah, accompanied by the President George Manneh Weah, distributed a huge

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# Ganta to Saclepea road project under construction

**-CICO assures**  
China Chongqing International Construction Corporation (CICO) says construction work continues on the 39 kilometer stretch of road linking Ganta to Saclepea in Nimba County.

In a press release issued in Monrovia on Tuesday, March 23, 2021 the company said intermittent rain over the last few weeks have not prevented road engineers and safety agents from carrying

out full construction work on the highway in line with approved design and specifications.

The release said since December this year the company embarked on the mobilization of manpower and heavy duty earth moving equipment to ensure that everything goes on according to plan.

CICO through its General Manager Yang Zetao pledged the company overriding commitment in making sure that the 39 kilometer Ganta to



Saclepea road project is completed on schedule as has been with all of its project in the past.

"Each day our engineers compared notes on key project related issues with the objective of ensuring that quality remains our priority while the goal of meeting the project completion date is being vigorously pursued," Mr. Yang indicated.

According to the release, CICO continues to make

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