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Continental News

Looting and shooting in South Africa 'war zone'

Protests which began after former South African President Jacob Zuma handed himself into police to serve a 15-month sentence have descended into days of violence and looting. The BBC has spoken to a few of the people caught in the middle. "We are on fire," Ian - not his real name - tells the BBC from riot-hit Durban in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province. In the last three days, he reckons he has managed an hour or two of sleep at a time. He and his team - who work for a private security company - are surviving on energy drinks as they wait and watch.

They have given up trying to stop the looting which has destroyed so many buildings since protests calling for South Africa's former President Jacob Zuma to be freed from jail began last week. Ian has heard reports of three security guards being killed since the weekend.

Now, they are just protecting the neighbourhoods where they live.

"We've gone to a place where we are going to watch them stealing, we are not interfering with them - don't harm us." In another part of Durban, a woman is preparing to make the 20-minute drive to her family from her home in a badly hit residential area. She doesn't know if she will make it, or be turned back by one of the blockades which have popped up on the city's roads.

But she knows she cannot

bear another night of lying in bed listening to the gunshots.

"I am so scared," the woman - who asked not to be named - told the BBC.

"It literally feels like being in a war zone with gunshots, fires and smoke going up everywhere for the last two days." When the smoke clears, the best view of what is happening in Durban is from the air.

Jayshree Parasuramen,

traffic reporter on East Coast Radio's helicopter, could see it all: factories burning, trucks moved to block roads and "thousands" of people looting shops and warehouses, with cars waiting to collect their ill-gotten goods. "They formed a shield around the areas they were looting," she explains. "So, the entrances and exits were blocked, and a lot of people crowding around that area to not allow anyone or any motorists to pass."

The people, she said, were also "heavily armed".

"The amount of gunshots that we could hear was unbelievable - and then petrol bombs. We couldn't even hover around those areas because of them opening fire, and then eventually we just had to land, because of the live ammunition that they were using."

Officials - all the way up to President Cyril Ramaphosa - have all suggested the protests were hijacked by criminal elements. Others believe the hardships exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic created a tinderbox which just needed a spark to set it alight. The

spark, in this case, was jailing Mr Ramaphosa's predecessor for contempt of court.

"We knew, when we locked down again, this was bound to happen, because the longer you leave people hungry, these events would take place," Eldrin Naidoo told the BBC from Johannesburg. But, as Tumelo Mosetlhi points out, in the long run it will only harm those who are already struggling.

"To see people's shops and businesses being gutted - yes, people are hungry today, but tomorrow there will be more unemployment, more pain, more suffering in a nation that is trying to recover and rebuild itself." For the moment, those living in the areas at the heart of the violence cannot think about the future. "You don't know if you are going to make it to tomorrow - that's the feeling right now," Jayshree Parasuramen says. Ian and his team, meanwhile, have given up listening to the radio for information, and are now just watching for the gangs to approach. "Saps [South African Police Service] are just inundated with calls that they are not taking calls anymore," he says. "So we are calling on the local men in the area to try to come out and defend to keep their families safe." BBC



A mother in Durban is forced to throw her baby from a building after it was set on fire

Tigray rebels hindering aid, hiring child soldiers - PM

Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has accused the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) of starting to fight along aid corridors in the war-torn northern Tigray region. The TPLF, the former ruling party of Tigray which was ousted in November by the army, has since joined forces with other groups to form the rebel Tigray Defence

Force (TDF).

The rebels captured the regional capital Mekelle last month and the government withdrew its troops and unilaterally declared a "humanitarian ceasefire" to allow farming activity to take place and for aid to be delivered.

But the TPLF demanded a negotiated truce, with conditions including the complete withdrawal of Eritrean

troops and the regional Amhara forces.

In his statement, Mr Abiy also accused the international community of silence about what he said was the TPLF's recruitment of child soldiers - his first comments on the issue since Tigrayan forces launched their new offensive.

They follow remarks by military spokesman Col Getnet Adane, who said that the army was ready to take measures if it received orders. The TPLF said this week that it had recaptured the towns Korem and Alamata along Tigray's southern borders with the Amhara region. The Amhara government has recalled retired members of its security forces as fighting escalates in the disputed areas on its border. On Monday, the United States said it was "gravely concerned" about the intense fighting along the Amhara-Tigray border and reiterated its call for a negotiated ceasefire. BBC



Earlier this month, Tigrayan forces paraded captured Ethiopian soldiers through the city of Mekelle

UN wants abuses against Eritrean refugees investigated

The head of the UN refugee agency says he has received "credible and corroborated reports of reprisal attacks, abductions, arrests and violence meted out against Eritrean refugees for their perceived affiliation with one side or the other throughout this bloody conflict".

Filippo Grandi expressed his concern about widespread attacks against refugees committed by numerous armed players in the Mai Aini and Adi Harush refugee camps, primarily at night.

Hundreds of Eritreans have been arrested in Shire in the last week and he demanded clarification from the authorities in Mekelle, as well as the immediate release of the refugees and asylum seekers. Mr Grandi urged the federal government and the Tigray Regional Government to initiate formal investigations into all credible allegations. Ethiopian forces have been battling the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in the region since



November.

Despite calls for ceasefire in region, Tigrayan rebel forces launched a new offensive in the northern region of Ethiopia and seized major towns including Korem and Alamata.

Clashes have also erupted near the refugee camp, which is home to thousands of refugees, according to the AFP news agency. Mr Grandi has called for an end to the violence and intimidation directed at Eritrean refugees, as well as the use and manipulation of refugees for political benefit.

The UN refugee chief has urged for the opening of the Shire and Mekelle airport and all land connections into Tigray, to aid Eritrean refugees and other displaced people in Tigray.

Close to 100,000 Eritrean refugees have been living in camps in the Tigray region. They fled political persecution and compulsory military service, long before the current conflict. BBC

EDITORIAL

Liberia's messy COVID-19 fight

AMID DAILY RISE IN new cases of the deadly Delta variant from the coronavirus, Liberia is now without vaccines to prevent its citizens from contracting the virus, which is spreading across the country like wildfire.

THE COUNTRY'S REMAINING DOSES of the 96,000 AstraZeneca jabs received in April this year expired on Saturday, July 10, 2021, having administered over 90,000 among a population of 4.5 million people, barely a drop in the bucket.

WHAT IS EVEN of grave concern though is authorities' handling of the third wave of outbreak, particularly from the Delta variant brought into the country largely by travelers from India and other Asian countries via the Roberts International Airport, where health regulations were seriously compromised for alleged personal gains.

AIRPORT SECURITY AND health regulators commercialized COVID-19 test results, and in some instances, gave incoming visitors access to the capital unchecked, raising infection rate among the population. On the other hand, the Minister of Health Doctor Wilhelmina S. Jallah has been more concerned with collecting US\$75.00 from travelers for COVID-19 test than keeping surveillance.

THE GOVERNMENT IS still cleaning up the mess created at the RIA effecting suspensions and dismissal, but the harm has already been caused with over 5,000 confirmed cases and nearly 200 deaths recorded, at least by official counts.

EVEN CITIZENS THAT took the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccines are being left to wait up to August or September for arrival of fresh consignment of vaccines, while the virus rages, affecting lives.

THE GRIM PICTURE has left the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to place Liberia's COVID-19 at Level 4, meaning a very high risk country in the entire West Africa. As a result, travelers from Liberia are being subjected to vigorous scrutiny at airports in the region and beyond.

UNLIKE GHANA AND elsewhere in the region, Liberia is yet to embark on mass testing to identify infection trend among its population for informed decision making. Health institutions here lack basis supplies, including PPEs to fight the virus.

FRONTLINE AUTHORITIES IN the COVID-19 fight need to wake up and recalibrate to put Liberia on the right trajectory if we should win the battle against the pandemic. The Weah administration seems to have lost focus in the ongoing fight after it mismanaged US\$30 million allotted from the national budget for stimulus package during the first round of the outbreak in 2020. The government has failed to account for the money.

AMID THE SEEMING lack of political will and clear strategy in tackling the health crisis, the population faces risk of any kind, including mass infection and death that could the bring the country on its knees.

COMMENTARY

By Mary Robinson

A Human-Rights Approach to Global Challenges

DUBLIN - The COVID-19 pandemic has recast the world for millions of people. Or, more correctly, the pandemic has exposed and aggravated deep inequalities of race, gender, and class across societies, and highlighted the inability of many political systems to respond in ways that protect individual human rights and dignity. The world will neither rebuild from this crisis, nor have any chance of tackling wider existential threats such as climate change, until we can once more instill a sense of hope in political and civic life.

Fortunately, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a roadmap already exists to help humanity chart a path forward. The declaration, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, is as relevant today as it was amid the physical and moral devastation caused by World War II.

Article 1 of the declaration states an abiding truth with resounding clarity: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." To realize this vision today, we must push leaders to go beyond warm words and commit to meaningful, feasible, and measurable actions. In particular, they need to ensure equitable global distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and provide adequate financial support to countries most vulnerable to the ravages of climate change.

For starters, high-income countries must take steps to achieve the Gavi COVAX Advance Market Commitment target of providing at least one billion vaccine doses to the world's poorest countries no later than September 1, 2021, and more than two billion doses by mid-2022.

It is both morally unjust and - in health and economic terms - myopic for rich countries to hoard COVID-19 vaccines for their own populations. The longer the coronavirus persists and mutates in poorer countries with fewer resources, the further away humanity as a whole will be from fully vanquishing the threat to lives and livelihoods.

In the same spirit, G7 and G20 leaders should support calls at the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization for voluntary licensing and technology transfer for production of vaccines. Failing that, they should back an immediate waiver of certain intellectual-property rights under WTO rules - a move that US President Joe Biden recently supported.

Sadly, at their recent summit in the United Kingdom, G7 leaders failed to show an understanding of the scale of their responsibility to address the inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic. More broadly, COVID-19 has exposed the

shortcomings of narrow nationalism and populist policies that disdain scientific evidence and empathy. No country, regardless of its power or size, can tackle the public-health threat effectively on its own.

It is essential that leaders learn from their mistakes and heed the recommendations of the expert Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response. Only properly financed, integrated, and organized health systems will be able to withstand future pandemics and health emergencies.

As matters stand, however, the rich world's failures in tackling COVID-19 have increased the trust deficit between the Global North and South. This in turn will make it more difficult to reach an agreement at the next critical international diplomatic gathering: the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow in November.

All countries need to ratchet up their near-term emissions-reduction targets ahead of COP26, and we are still waiting for the major emitters to do so. In addition, rich countries must rebuild trust by showing how they will increase their climate finance contributions - including a greater share for adaptation - to deliver the long-pledged \$100 billion per year to help developing countries combat global warming and its effects.

Two common threads run through the shared challenges we face in defending human rights, overcoming the pandemic, and tackling the climate crisis: the need for vigilance against complacency, and the responsibility to act for the greater good. In these testing times, we can all draw inspiration from a leader who never wavered in his commitment to human rights and justice: Nelson Mandela.

It is a historical irony that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in the same year that South Africa established its apartheid regime. But Mandela immediately saw the declaration's power and potential. Speaking in 1997 as president of South Africa, he reflected that, "For all the opponents of this pernicious system, the simple and noble words of the Universal Declaration were a sudden ray of hope at one of our darkest moments."

Today more than ever, we need to rediscover and reassert the declaration's principles of solidarity and common endeavor that Mandela so powerfully articulated throughout his life. Our task now is not to "build back better," because we cannot build back from a status quo ante that produced inequitable and dysfunctional systems. Rather, we must "build forward better," marshaling our efforts with hope, discipline, and determination to build a sustainable, peaceful, and just world for future generations.

The New Dawn
TRULY INDEPENDENT

OPINION

By Takatoshi Ito

Japan's Quiet Olympics

TOKYO - On July 8, the Japanese government declared a state of emergency in Tokyo until August 22, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. That means the Tokyo Olympic Games (July 23-August 8) will be subject to strict limits on spectators for large events.

The new restrictions doubtless come as a disappointment to Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who has been eager to showcase the Games as a symbol of Japan's ability to overcome the difficulties it has faced since the 2011 earthquake and Fukushima nuclear disaster. There now will be no roaring cheers at any of the races or other larger competitions. The festive mood in Tokyo has quickly evaporated, as has any hope of a boost to the local economy.

True, a state of emergency in Japan is much softer than the lockdowns imposed in many Western countries over the past 16 months. People can still carry on with an almost-normal life of shopping and eating out, albeit with more restrictions on restaurants and large retailers' hours of operation. But this is the fourth declaration of a pandemic state of emergency in Tokyo since April 2020, and restrictions on serving alcohol in restaurants have been added since the last one, because loud conversations without masks are a suspected source COVID-19 cluster spreading.

Although Suga's government has "requested" that people eschew unnecessary travel and work from home during the state of emergency, this admonition proved to be effective only during the first emergency in April-May 2020. Since then, the government has tried different approaches. Last fall, for example, it actually encouraged people to travel by offering subsidies to stimulate the tourism industry. But, following a big surge of infections toward the end of 2020, a second state of emergency was imposed, from January 8 until March 21, and that was soon followed a third, from April 25 to June 20.

These stop-and-go emergency declarations indicate either a lack of will or an inability to learn from previous episodes. The Japanese experience thus stands in stark contrast with that of New York, which was regarded as a global epicenter of infections back in the spring of 2020. After maintaining an extended semi-lockdown, it was able to reopen gradually this year without backtracking.

Not surprisingly, the Japanese public has become increasingly critical of the government for its inability to forecast and control infections, and there is growing frustration with the slow pace of the country's vaccination rollout. The critics are right: the vaccination rate in Japan lags far behind most other advanced economies. As of July 11, Japan was administering doses at a rate of 49 for every 100 people, compared to 90 in France, 98 in Germany, 100 in the United States, and 119 in the United Kingdom. With television and YouTube images now showing the cheerful return to mask-free normal life in New York and other cities, many Japanese are envious.

But the Japanese public has been divided between those demanding a cancellation of the entire Olympic-Paralympic Games and those (particularly in the restaurant business) objecting to strong restrictions on social and economic activities. Obviously, the government cannot satisfy both sides at once, so it has settled on the narrow middle path of holding the games without spectators.

On the economic front, overall consumption has been dampened this year by the intermittent surges of infections in Tokyo and the stop-and-go emergency declarations. In April-June of this year, the Nikkei 225 performed worse than any other major advanced-economy stock index. Given that a weak economy is always politically damaging to the ruling party, Suga is under immense pressure to achieve a strong reopening and recovery.

But to have resumed the full range of economic activities, and ensure that the Games would be a festive affair, new infections needed to remain low. The only way to do that was to roll out vaccinations early and rapidly, as happened in New York. Although procurement has been accelerating, Japan was late to secure vaccines, and Japanese authorities have now revealed that as of the end of June, the country had received only 13.7 million of an expected 40 million Moderna vaccine doses.

Whatever happens this summer, Suga will face a party leadership election in September, and then a general election before the end of the full term in October. As soon as the Olympic Games are over, Japan's political games will begin.

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OP-ED

By Brahma Chellaney

Biden's Afghan Blunder

NEW DELHI - Afghanistan is on the brink of catastrophe, and it is US President Joe Biden's fault. By overruling America's top generals and ordering the hasty withdrawal of US troops, Biden opened the way for Taliban terrorists to capture more than a quarter of Afghanistan's districts. Now, the Taliban is pushing toward Kabul, and the United States is looking weaker than ever.

The US effectively ended its military operations in Afghanistan on July 1, when it handed over to the Afghan government the sprawling Bagram Air Base, which long served as the staging ground for US operations in the country. In fact, "handover" is too generous a description. In a sign of what is to come, US forces quietly slipped out of the base overnight after shutting off the electricity. The resulting security lapse allowed looters to scavenge the facilities before Afghan troops arrived and gained control.

Biden has vehemently defended his decision to withdraw, arguing that the US "did not go to Afghanistan to nation-build" and that "staying would have meant US troops taking casualties." He has also stood by his rushed approach, insisting that "speed is safety" in this context. "How many thousands more of America's daughters and sons are you willing to risk?"

The implication was clear: Questioning the wisdom of the US withdrawal is tantamount to supporting the endangerment of Americans. But it is Afghans who are really in jeopardy.

Recall the last time the US left a war unfinished: In 1973, it hastily abandoned its allies in South Vietnam. The next year, 80,000 South Vietnamese soldiers and civilians were reportedly killed as a result of the conflict, making it the deadliest year of the entire Vietnam War. It is also worth noting that in 1975, the US effectively handed Cambodia to the China-backed ultra-communist Khmer Rouge, who went on to carry out unimaginable horrors.

Now, the US is leaving Afghans at the mercy of a marauding Islamist force - one with a long history of savage behavior. Already, the Taliban offensive has displaced tens of thousands of civilians. And while the Afghan government in Kabul teeters, the Taliban is seizing American weapons from the Afghan military and showing them off as they march across the country.

America's justification for rushing out of Afghanistan is much weaker than its reasoning for leaving Vietnam. Whereas 58,220 Americans (largely draftees) died in Vietnam, only 2,448 US soldiers (all volunteers) died over the course of 20 years in Afghanistan. Moreover, since the US formally ended its combat mission on January 1, 2015, the US has suffered just 99 fatalities, including in non-hostile incidents. During the same period, more than 28,000 Afghan police officers and soldiers have been killed.

None of this is to minimize the blood and treasure the US has sacrificed in Afghanistan, let alone suggest that American troops should stay indefinitely. On the contrary, ending America's longest war is a worthy goal. But Biden's approach entails effectively admitting that a terrorist militia has defeated the world's most powerful military, and then handing Afghanistan back to that militia. This undercuts global trust in the US, jeopardizes Afghan and regional security, and threatens to trigger a resurgence of terror worldwide.

The Taliban's impending return to power will surely energize and embolden other terrorist groups in the larger global jihadist movement. Furthermore, the Taliban, a creature of Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence, still receives significant aid from Pakistan's military. So, while Biden says that Afghanistan's future is now in its own hands, it is actually mostly in Pakistani hands, as Afghan President Ashraf Ghani recently noted.

Among those facing the most acute risks is India. When the Taliban was last in power, from 1996 to 2001, it allowed Pakistan to use Afghan territory to train terrorists for missions in India. Its return to power could thus open a new front for terrorism against India, which would then have to shift its focus from intensifying military standoffs with China in the Himalayas.

The Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan helps China in other ways, too. Given that Pakistan is a Chinese client, the US withdrawal paves the way for China to make strategic inroads into Afghanistan, with its substantial mineral wealth and strategic location between Pakistan and Iran.

China would achieve this by offering the Taliban the two things it desperately needs: international recognition and economic aid. With Russia also likely to recognize the Taliban's leadership in Afghanistan, the group will have little incentive to moderate its violence, despite its current attempts to polish its image.

Biden had a better option: The US could have maintained a small residual force in Afghanistan, in order to provide critical air support and reassurance to Afghan forces. Yes, this would have violated the deal that Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump, struck with the Taliban in February 2020. But the Taliban have already violated that Faustian bargain. Biden was happy to overturn many of Trump's other actions, making his insistence on upholding this deal difficult to understand.

Biden says the US is "developing a counterterrorism over-the-horizon capability" that does not require a physical presence in Afghanistan. But if Afghan security continues to unravel, "over-the-horizon" operations will make little difference. The more likely scenario will be an emergency evacuation of US embassy personnel and other American citizens from Kabul, much like the evacuation from Saigon in 1975. India, for one, has already begun such an exodus, evacuating its consulate staff from Kandahar.

Robert Gates, who served as secretary of defense under presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, wrote in 2014 that Biden "has been wrong on nearly every major foreign-policy and national-security issue over the past four decades." The hurried US withdrawal from Afghanistan is set to extend that pattern.

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ARTICLE

ARTICLE

Botswana police use Israeli Cellebrite tech to search another journalist's phone

By Jonathan Rozen/CPJ Senior Africa Researcher

Tsaone Basimanebotlhe was not expecting security agents to appear at her home in a village outside Gaborone, Botswana's capital, in July 2019, she told CPJ in a recent interview. But they didn't come to arrest or charge her, she recalled - they came for her devices, hunting for the source for an article published by her employer, Mmegi newspaper.

Basimanebotlhe, a politics reporter, said she surrendered her phone and password to the agents after they presented a warrant and could not find her computer. A senior officer then used technology sold by the Israel-based company Cellebrite to extract and analyze thousands of her messages, call logs, and emails, and her web browsing history, according to an affidavit from the police forensics laboratory. The affidavit, which CPJ reviewed, was submitted during a related court case.

"They're looking for people that are divulging information to the media," Basimanebotlhe told CPJ.

Botswana police also deployed Cellebrite technology to search the phone of Oratile Dikologang, a local editor charged in 2020 over Facebook posts who alleged that police violently interrogated him about his sources, as CPJ recently reported.

The use of powerful tools provided by private companies to scour seized devices raises significant concerns over privacy and press freedom. The experiences of Basimanebotlhe and Dikologang demonstrate that police in Botswana use digital forensics equipment to sweep up vast quantities of journalists' communications from seized devices, regardless of whether they are charged with a crime. The extent of these searches was only revealed when police documents were submitted in court months after the fact, and it's not clear what happened to the data.

Botswana's security forces routinely arrest journalists and take possession of their devices, CPJ has found. In March, Botswana police seized computers and phones from arrested reporters and media workers with the Moeladilothoko News Boiler, a private, Facebook-based outlet, CPJ recently documented; officers demanded their passcodes, answered calls and read messages on the devices, and kept two of the phones as evidence even after the charges connected to that arrest were withdrawn in April. David Baaitse, a reporter for Botswana's Weekend Post newspaper,



A Cellebrite forensic device extracts data from a Samsung mobile phone during a demonstration at a training centre in Beijing, China on June 19, 2018. Police in Botswana used Cellebrite technology to search a journalist's phone for a source. (Reuters/Cate Cadell)

separately told CPJ that intelligence agents took phones belonging to him and his colleague to be analyzed for six months following their arrest last year.

"If you take my phone and go and analyze it, you have my folders and everything, all my contacts," Baaitse told CPJ in a recent interview. He added that such actions by security forces hinder journalists' ability to gather information, saying, "Sources, they no longer trust us. They no longer want to deal directly with us."

In Basimanebotlhe's case, Mmegi reported that when her phone was first seized in July 2019, police were seeking evidence for their investigation of a former intelligence chief, Isaac Kgosi. The police claimed that Kgosi had taken photographs of undercover security agents, exposing their identities, and that those photographs were published by Mmegi in a February 2019 article, Basimanebotlhe said. The article, which was attributed to a staff reporter, had been written by one of Basimanebotlhe's colleagues, Mmegi later clarified.

"They alleged that I had photos of DIS people," Basimanebotlhe told CPJ, referring to an acronym for Botswana's Directorate on Intelligence and Security Services. "They believed I'm the one who wrote the story," she said.

The affidavit detailing the forensic search of Basimanebotlhe's devices was submitted during Kgosi's prosecution over the photographs, his lawyer, Unoda Mack, told CPJ by phone. It states that police used Cellebrite's Universal Forensic Extraction Device (UFED) and Physical Analyzer technologies to retrieve and evaluate the information from her phone, but found no evidence relevant to their investigation, according to CPJ's review. Mack told CPJ that Kgosi pleaded not guilty, and local media reported that a magistrate ultimately dismissed for lack of evidence the charge that he had exposed agents' identities.

"They said they didn't find anything in my phone," Basimanebotlhe told CPJ. "[But] they went through my SMS, my WhatsApp [messages]."

CPJ contacted Botswana police spokesperson Dipheko Motube over the phone about Basimanebotlhe's case and he requested that questions be sent via messaging app. He did not respond to those questions, and previously declined to comment on the case involving Dikologang because it was still before the court. In response to questions about the Moeladilothoko News Boiler arrests, Motube told CPJ

that investigations "may necessitate" detentions and confiscation of "any implement which may have been used in the commission of the offence" with "due regard to the rights of the individual arrested."

Reached by phone, Botswana government spokesperson Batlhalefi Leagajang requested questions about security forces' alleged use of digital forensics technology be sent by email. CPJ sent those questions, but received no response.

Cellebrite, which is owned by the Japan-based Sun Corporation, says that its UFED toolkit can extract data from mobile phones, SIM cards, and other devices even after the information was deleted, and its Physical Analyzer helps examine digital data. In April, Nasdaq reported that Cellebrite would be listed on the stock exchange via a merger with TWC Tech Holdings II Corp., a U.S.-based special purpose acquisition company (SPAC) designed to take companies public.

In response to CPJ's questions about the use of its technology in Botswana and human rights due diligence processes, Cellebrite provided a statement emailed via the Fusion Public Relations company that said it could not "speak to any specifics" about its customers. Cellebrite "requires that agencies and governments that use our technology uphold the standards of international human rights law," the statement said. "Our compliance solutions enable an audit trail and can discern who, when and how data was accessed, which leads to accountability in the agencies and organizations that use our tools," the company added. Cellebrite did not directly address CPJ's question about if the company considered the use of its tools to search journalists' devices to be acceptable.

Sun Corporation and TWC Tech Holdings II Corp. did not respond to questions CPJ emailed about this article.

"[Police] want access to the data so they can know the sources of these journalists," Dick Bayford, a lawyer in Gaborone whose firm represented Basimanebotlhe and Baaitse, told CPJ in a recent interview. "It [has] a chilling effect on freedom of the press."



Tsaone Basimanebotlhe
(Mmegi/Thalefang Charles)

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Court grants Bility permanent custody of children

By Winston W. Parley

The Civil Law Court "A" in Monrovia has granted Mr. Sidike Musa Bility permanent custody of his two minor kids, but with the proviso that they will spend the first and third weekends of every month and all holidays with their mother, Warti Nancy

interaction with the children and when enough proof of immorality or violence is established, she shall file information for the court's reconsideration of its decision.

"That the custody of the two kids are hereby permanently placed in the possession of Mr. SidikeBility, the natural father," Judge Gbeisay said in the ruling,

worship in Church and in the Mosque until they reach their maturity and select their own religion.

Giving some of the factors considered in making its decision, the court revealed that Mrs. Clarke is carrying a pregnancy which "she must have conceived while she was yet married to Mr. SidikeBility," and in the mind of the court, such action may develop bad blood between Mr. Bility and Mrs. Clarke's new husband, Mr. Romeo Clarke.

Judge Gbeisay said such action has the potential to transfer Mr. Clarke's aggression to the children.

Additionally, Judge Gbeisay indicated that there is no doubt that the natural father of the two kids, Mr. Bility, who serves as Green Petroleum Chief Executive Officer, has better income as compared to the mother.

On the basis of these factors, the judge ruled that the wellbeing and best interest of the children which is paramount to the court is likely to be best served in the care of their father.

He therefore granted Mr. Bility's Bill of Information as opposed to Mrs. Clarke's resistance. But Mrs. Clarke's lawyers have taken exception to the court's ruling and announced an appeal to the



Robinson - Clarke, Bility's divorced wife.

Judge YamieQuiquiGbeisay, Sr., ruled Wednesday, 14 July at the Temple of Justice that the mother shall monitor the father's moral conduct, social behavior and

adding that the custody of the children will not be relinquished to any third party including the grandparents.

Additionally, Judge Gbeisay ruled that since Mr. Bility is a Muslim and his divorced wife Mrs. Clarke is a Christian, the children shall be allowed to

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 7

Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Palava Hut Hearings Take Off in Rivercess County

Liberia this week began another round of Palava Hut hearings in Central C District, Rivercess County, where over 30 mass graves were documented. The Palava hut hearing is one of the 142 recommendations of the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) final report published in 2009.

The Hearings provide an opportunity for alleged perpetrators and victims of lower gravity of human rights violations such as arson, forced labour and displacement that took place during the civil war, to dialogue and be reconciled through truth telling, atonement and psychosocial support.

The Rivercess hearing, running from 13 to 19 July 2021, precedes statement taking, vetting of witnesses, and providing them with pre and post-psychosocial



support.

It is being conducted by the country's Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR), with support from UNDP.

Traditional elders and

community leaders with guidance from the INCHR are presiding over the hearing, where truth-telling by both victims and perpetrators is done to establish a common ground for peace and

NEC boss on speaking engagement in Nigeria

The Chairperson of the National Elections Commission, (NEC), is expected to arrive Wednesday in Uyo, Akwa-Ibom State, in Nigeria at the invitation of the Pan African Women Projects of South Africa to serve as guest speaker to the South-South Sensitization Workshop for women Voters.

A NEC-Liberia statement quotes a communication from the Secretary General of the

head of mission, Dr. EnoUdensi. The two elections experts will travel from Lagos to the IBOM State Airport to be met on arrival by the Resident Electoral Commissioner, (REC) of the Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria, INEC.

NEC-Liberia release quotes a letter addressed to its Chairperson Madam Browne Lansanah, as saying the South-South Sensitization Workshop organized by the Pan African Women Projects is in



Pan African Women Projects, Dr. SindiswaDastile, as saying that the Sensitization Women Workshop for women voters is in support to Independent National Electoral Commission, (INEC), continuous Voters Registration Exercise in the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The Chairperson of NEC-Liberia, Madam Davidetta Browne is accompanied by the Pan African Women Projects

collaboration with the Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria, INEC.

According to the dispatch from Nigeria, the NEC-Liberia Chairperson will later travel to Abuja on Friday, 16 July 2021 for a reception and press conference at the Headquarters of INEC to be hosted by the Chairperson of INEC, MahmoodYakubu.

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reconciliation.

A hundred and forty (140) people including victims, alleged perpetrators and their families are participating in the hearings being held in Neezuin, Saryah and Garpue towns.

"UNDP is supporting the Government of Liberia to implement the recommendations of the Truth

and Reconciliation Commission in the quest for a more reconciled and cohesive society, which serves as an impetus for sustainable development. The participation of the people of Rivercess Centre "C" District in this process is a demonstration of their willingness to let go of the past, forge genuine

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 7

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Kemayah, others host Africa Regional Dialogue

Liberian Foreign Affairs Minister Ambassador Dee-Maxwell Saah Kemayah, Sr., has joined host of other officials to co-organize an Africa Regional Dialogue in the city of Agadir, Morocco to discuss issue affecting the agriculture sector of the Continent.

The rest are Representative of the African Group to the Advisory Board of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit and Ambassador Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the UN and Representative of the African Group to the

The Liberian Chief Diplomat commended the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) for the establishment of the Africa National Food Systems Conveners' Platform; bringing together, Africa National Conveners; with the aim of facilitating peer exchange on the national dialogues and the development of the Africa Common Position on Food Systems; to share on emerging issues and national priorities; in pursuit of resilient and inclusive food systems; and providing technical support to National Conveners.

He said Africa being no

the National Dialogue Convener; had initially planned physical in-country dialogues in the five agricultural regions in our country, disclosing that the dialogues were scheduled to be held in June, 2021. "Regrettably, the situation of the COVID-19 Pandemic in the country; as around the globe; caused a delay in convening the National Dialogues.

"It is welcoming and appreciative that the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Liberia has offered the Government of Liberia through the National Convener; Hon. Jeanine Milly Cooper, Minister of Agriculture; its field offices in Liberia as hubs to convene the National Dialogues virtually. The dialogues are now scheduled to be held from August 4-12, 2021; and will be convened through the assistance of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Programme teleconferencing facilities across the country", Minister Kemayah said.

Accordingly, Minister Kemayah further disclosed that through consultations with stakeholders, four topical issues have been identified for discussions during the National Dialogues. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); through its technical support to the National Coordination Secretariat; will develop sub-topics and points of discussions. The four main topical issues for discussions during the National Dialogues will include: Food Value Chain Development: Challenges and Opportunities for Liberia's Economic Growth; Ending Youth Unemployment t h r o u g h Agriculture; Mitigating Climate Impacts on Liberian Farmers; and Reducing Child Malnutrition in Liberia through Viable Food Systems. These National Dialogues are meant to generate broader views; and stimulate inclusive participation from all spectra of the Liberian society.

exception; the challenges and fragility of food systems; particularly, for the most marginalized populations; have become even more evident as a result of the disruptions to food systems; caused by the Covid-19 pandemic; further exposing the vulnerabilities in food systems across many African countries. When our food systems fail, the resulting disorder threatens education, health and the economy; as well as human rights, peace and security.

Minister Kemayah used the occasion to mention that the Government of Liberia through



Minister Dee-Maxwell Saah Kemayah, Sr.

Advisory Board of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit on Tuesday, July 13, 2021.

Speaking during the dialogue in Agadir, Morocco, Minister Kemayah said the African Regional Dialogue presents an opportunity to hold vital discussions; not only on the needs of the African continent in general; and individual African Countries; in particular; but also, the ambitions to engender a shared path towards the eradication of hunger; building inclusive, healthier food systems; and protecting the planet.

According to a dispatch, Minister Kemayah intoned that as they endeavor collectively to enhance Africa's shared vision; core values and perspectives; he want to also acknowledge the contributions of relevant regional stakeholders; including the African Union; for its leadership in steering the process of developing Africa's common position; and the partnership of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

Court grants Bility

Cont'd from page 6

Supreme Court of Liberia.

Argument in the child custody case was held at the Civil Law Court "A" in Monrovia on Monday, 12 July following Mr. Bility's request for permanent custody of his two minor children from their mother.

He had complained to the court that the mother of his two minor children, Mrs. Clarke had a relationship that was not favorable to their emotional, psychological, mental, physical health, stability and well-being, safety and security.

His lawyer Cllr. Michael Wilkins Wright, a former ECOWAS Court Judge, had argued that sharing custody between the parents was not working in the best interest of the children.

Cllr. Wright also accused Warti Nancy Robinson - Clarke's husband, Romeo Clarke, of allegedly being a criminal who was convicted by Criminal Court "C" at the Temple of Justice for stealing from the United Bank of Africa (UBA) - Liberia in a landmark US\$1.3 million syndicate.

He also said Mrs. Clarke was in the constant habit of leaving the children at home unattended and unsupervised

by an adult to the extent that the younger brother put an object in the ears of his older brother, something which led to him seeking medical attention at a health facility.

Wright told the court that on a particular night as Mrs. Clarke and her current husband Mr. Clarke fought, she drove the kids at 4 a.m. to their father Mr. Bility, which suggests she lacks everything of a capable mother to take care of the kids.

He claimed that Madam Clarke does not have the financial capability to take care of the children because she does not have a job or other visible means of income and has never worked in her life.

But lawyers representing Madam Clarke counter-argued that the decision for custody of children under the Domestic Relations Law and the question of children's rights provided for in the Children's Law and other statutes of Liberia is predicated and tenaciously hinged to the best interest of the children.

The lawyers pleaded that as a result of the moral unfitness of Mr. Bility, the Judge should grant their client permanent custody for the best interest of the innocent children.

Liberia's Truth

Cont'd from page 6

reconciliation and a more cohesive society," said James Monibah, UNDP's Team Lead for the Governance Programme.

The TRC recognized the Palava Hut model as a useful tool for peace building, healing, national reconciliation and restorative justice. The Independent National Commission on Human Rights, per section 46 of the TRC ACT of 2005 is mandated to oversee the implementation of the TRC

recommendations, while the civil society is tasked to monitor and campaign for the implementation of the recommendations.

To date, the Commission has conducted similar hearings in Tchien District in Grand Gedeh County (2016), Voinjama District in Lofa County (2017) and Tewor District in Grand Cape Mount (2020).

These hearings have brought closure to victims and provided a space for people, families and communities.

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Français

Les opposants Cummings et Boakaine répondront pas présents à l'invitation du Sénat

M. Alexander Cummings et Joseph Nyumah Boakai, respectivement leader politique du Congrès national alternatif et de l'ancien Parti au pouvoir, ont adressé des lettres au Sénat libérien pour faire part de leur incapacité de se présenter à la date prévue à l'audience relative à la mise en œuvre des recommandations du Rapport de la Commission de vérité et réconciliation.

Dans sa communication lors de la session extraordinaire du Sénat le lundi 12 juillet, M. Cummings a fait valoir que les démarches en cours concernant les recommandations de la CVR constituent une violation grave du rapport en question.

Le chef de l'ANC a demandé dans sa lettre à ce qu'il apparaisse devant le sénat à une date ultérieure, se disant être pris au dépourvu par l'invitation de la chambre haute du parlement libérien. Il a dit

avoir besoin de plus de temps pour pouvoir aborder de manière optimale les questions d'intérêt national clés telles qu'elles sont présentées dans le rapport de la CVR, dont les préoccupations sociales, politiques et économiques.

Il a également indiqué que son incapacité de comparaître devant le sénat à la date prévue est aussi due à l'épidémie de la Covid-19 qui fait ravage dans le pays. Il a toutefois promis de

faire parvenir par écrit sa position quant à la voie à suivre dans la mise en œuvre des recommandations de la CVR.

Pour sa part, l'ancien vice-président Joseph Boakai a invité les sénateurs au respect de l'état de droit et à se conformer aux meilleures pratiques internationales. Il a aussi mis en avant l'argument

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9



Mr. Alexander Cummings



Ex-VP Joseph Nyumah Boakai

Cartes d'électeur biométriques : la commission électorale invitée à comparaître au sénat

Plusieurs agences gouvernementales ont été invitées par le Sénat libérien pour donner des explications sur la proposition des cartes d'électeur biométriques en vue des élections de 2023. Il s'agit de la Commission électorale nationale, du ministère des Finances et de la Planification du développement et du Registre national d'identification.

Le sénat veut que ces institutions travaillent ensemble pour proposer un plan réaliste qui traitera le

problème des fraudes électorales et d'autres pratiques inutiles pendant les processus électoraux.

Le sénateur du comté de Rivercess, Willington Geevon Smith, ancien employé du registre national d'identification, a fait valoir que le système d'enregistrement biométrique des électeurs est la meilleure façon d'éviter les fraudes et les doublures.

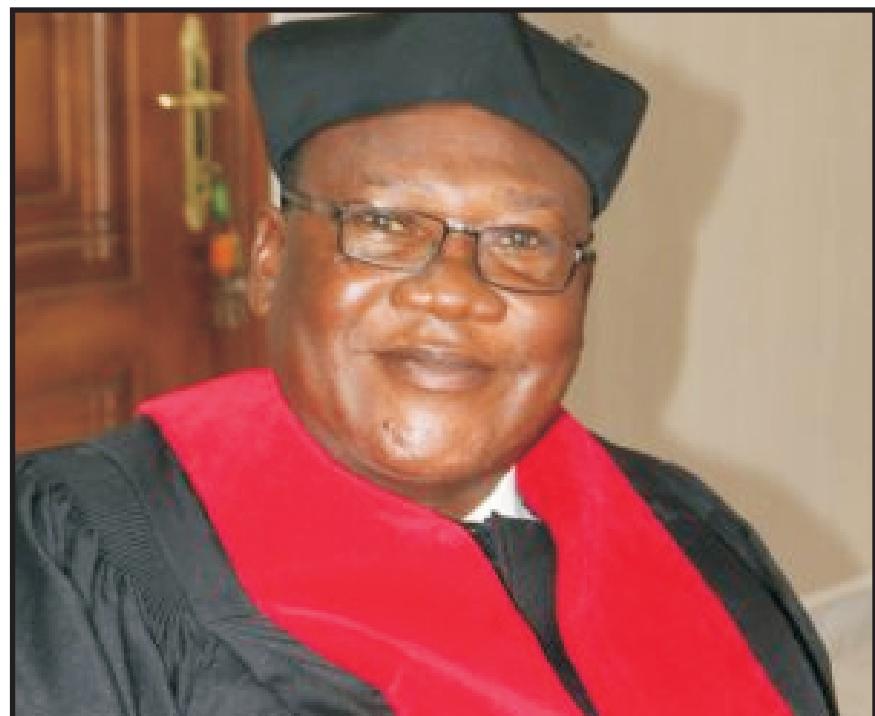
Selon lui, le NIR a la capacité de procéder à l'enregistrement biométrique des électeurs même pour les autorités de la NEC et des autres agences du pays. Il a

souligné la nécessité pour ces organisations de travailler ensemble à la mise en place du système ici comme c'est le cas dans les pays voisins.

Pour sa part, le sénateur du comté de Sinoe, J. Milton Teahjay, appelle à une réduction drastique des allocations inutiles dans le budget proposé par la commission électorale afin de donner la priorité aux questions les plus essentielles telles que les cartes d'électeur biométriques, qui, selon lui, sont indispensables à la transparence et la crédibilité des élections au Libéria.

Par ailleurs, le président du comité sénatorial des commissions et agences autonomes, le sénateur du comté de Bong, le Dr Henrue F. Tokpah, a dit avoir rencontré les autorités de la NEC à plusieurs reprises et discuté du budget à soumettre à l'Assemblée législative en vue des élections de 2023.

Le sénateur du comté de Bomi, Edwin M. Snowe, dans une motion, a demandé au comité mixte d'inviter les autorités compétentes et de soumettre un rapport à la plénière dans une semaine.



Éditorial

COVID-19 : nous allons visiblement de mal en pis ?

Tout va mal au Libéria, car chaque jour plus de 200 nouveaux cas sont enregistrés au niveau de la population et les décès ne cessent d'augmenter.

Les morgues privées sont submergées de cadavres, tandis que les cercueils se font rares. Déjà, le Centre américain de contrôle des maladies et de Prévention a revu la hausse le niveau d'alerte, en le situant à 4, le niveau le plus élevé. Le pays risque de succomber progressivement à la pandémie, si des efforts concertés ne sont pas entrepris immédiatement.

Les autorités sanitaires du pays continuent de faire croire au public qu'elles sont à la hauteur de la tâche, après avoir annoncé des mesures préventives. Cependant, la réalité sur le terrain montre le contraire, vu que de nouveaux cas et les décès se comptent par des centaines. Il est vrai que les combattants n'abandonneront jamais jusqu'à la mort du dernier combattant, mais le peuple libérien ne veut pas être décapité ou conduit à l'abattoir.

Nous croyons fermement que les tests rapides sont le moyen le plus sûr pour inverser la tendance actuelle, ce n'est pas le fait d'attendre que les patients infectés soient emmenés à Star Base pour de l'oxygène qui est à peine disponible. Le Libéria ne peut contenir la résurgence du coronavirus à moins qu'une campagne massive de tests rapides ne soit lancée dans tout le pays.

Dans ce combat, nous avons besoin de toutes les forces, y compris les experts qui ne font pas actuellement partie du gouvernement. Le combat n'appartient pas qu'à la ministre de la Santé, le docteur Wilehmina S. Jallah, et son équipe ou au système de gestion des incidents. Tous les Libériens doivent se joindre au combat pour vaincre le COVID-19.

C'est dans cette optique que nous nous félicitons de l'engagement de 150 000 USD de la Fondation Cummings Africa envers notre crise sanitaire, rejoignant le gouvernement du Libéria pour atteindre les hôpitaux et les centres de santé en particulier et les citoyens en général.

Comme M. Alexander B. Cummings, fondateur de la Fondation et leader politique de l'Alternative National Congress (ANC) l'a déclaré la semaine dernière lors de l'annonce de ce geste, le Libéria est actuellement gravement menacé. Si nous ne nous unissons pas les mains pour faire de notre mieux pour les uns les autres, nous continuerons tous à être en danger, même si nous nous cachons dans les maisons.

En outre, ceux qui mènent le combat du côté du gouvernement devraient faire preuve de volonté politique. Nous exigeons la vigilance à l'aéroport international Roberts, aux ports maritimes et aux frontières terrestres pour limiter la résurgence.

Ce faisant, il faut que nous érigeons des points de contrôle pertinents qui pourraient stopper la propagation, en particulier dans les comtés. Le système de santé n'a pas la capacité de répondre à toute situation accablante en dehors du comté de Montserrado, alors que même le siège du gouvernement lui-même est sérieusement remis en question.

Qu'on ne se méprenne pas sur le fait que nous sommes ici pessimistes. Il s'agit d'une tentative honnête de présenter la sombre réalité afin que tous les Libériens se réveillent de leur sommeil, de leur état de déni et fassent face au danger qui nous attend en tant que peuple. Nous devons porter nos masques correctement, respecter la distance sociale, nous laver les mains régulièrement et éviter les rassemblements de masse ou les endroits surpeuplés, entre autres, pour arrêter la propagation.

Français

Les opposants Cummings et Boakaine

de la pandémie mondiale comme l'une des causes de son incapacité de comparaître à la date indiquée.

La direction du Sénat s'était afin penchées sur la question de la mise en œuvre du rapport final de la Commission vérité et réconciliation qui appelle à la création d'un tribunal des crimes de guerre et des crimes économiques au Libéria. La direction, au lieu du tribunal des crimes de guerre, avait recommandé plutôt une commission de justice transitionnelle.

La Commission Vérité et Réconciliation, dans son report final, exige des actions en justice contre les principaux auteurs des crimes de guerre commis lors de la crise libérienne.

Le 19 septembre 2019, le président Weah avait sollicité dans une lettre l'avis du Sénat sur la manière de procéder à la mise en œuvre du rapport final de la CVR. Mais la demande du président avait été mise en stand-by par le Sénat pendant près de trois ans en dépit de la pression publique.

Le mardi 22 juin 2021, les dirigeants du parlement ont soumis un document de trois pages à la plénière, proposant la mise sur pied d'une commission de justice de transition dont la mission sera de déterminer pourquoi les recommandations de la CVR n'ont pas été pleinement mises en œuvre en temps voulu. Il s'agit de savoir si la Commission vérité et réconciliation a bien fait son travail.

La Commission de Justice Transitionnelle sera chargée, selon le sénat, d'examiner l'effet de la loi d'août 2003 qui accorde l'amnistie aux protagonistes de la crise libérienne, y compris aux seigneurs de guerre, d'analyser les problèmes de crédibilité et de légitimité entourant le rapport final de la CVR étant donné qu'il n'avait été signé que par deux commissaires et les autres ayant présenté un rapport dissident.

Le sénat conseille en outre

au Président d'examiner la ratification ou l'adhésion du Libéria au Statut de Rome en 2004 après la guerre civile sur la création d'un tribunal des crimes de guerre, et de séparer ledit tribunal, qui a une dimension internationale, du tribunal des crimes économiques qui existe déjà au Libéria.

Les dirigeants du sénat soutiennent que l'objectif cardinal pour lequel la CVR avait été proposée par l'Accord de paix global d'Accra était de « fournir un forum qui aborderait les questions d'impunité, ainsi que l'opportunité pour les victimes et les auteurs de violations des droits humains de partager leurs expériences, afin d'avoir une image claire du passé pour faciliter une véritable guérison et réconciliation ».

Ils estiment que, conformément à l'article 48 du rapport de la CVR, le président n'est pas tenu de se conformer à toutes les recommandations du rapport, ajoutant que la seule exigence pour le non-respect par le président de l'une ou l'autre des recommandations est de donner des explications satisfaisantes au parlement, ce qui signifie que tant le président que le parlement détermineront finalement la meilleure option pour la guérison, la réconciliation et la situation des responsabilités.

"Il est donc clair que le but de la création de la CVR était de proposer des mesures qui réconcilieraient finalement le peuple, et non d'ouvrir une vieille plaie et de diviser le peuple davantage."

Le sénat avait appelé que les signataires de l'Accord de paix global envisageaient une Commission vérité du type sud-africain qui a soutenu la justice réparatrice plutôt que la justice rétributive, donc la même chose devrait avoir lieu au Libéria.

Pendant ce temps, les sénateurs devraient débattre de la recommandation en séance plénière et dégager une voie à suivre. Mais les observateurs politiques semblent s'accorder sur le fait que le régime actuel n'a aucunement l'intention de mettre en œuvre les recommandations de la commission vérité et réconciliation et veut ainsi jouer la montre.

COMMENTAIRE

Par Mary Robinson

Les défis planétaires dans la perspective des droits de l'homme

DUBLIN - La pandémie de COVID-19 a bouleversé la vie de millions de gens. Ou plus exactement, la pandémie a révélé et aggravé de criantes inégalités entre les races, les sexes et les classes au sein des sociétés, tout en soulignant l'incapacité de nombreux systèmes politiques à répondre de façon à protéger les droits humains et la dignité des individus. Le monde ne pourra pas reconstruire après cette crise, ni avoir la moindre chance de s'attaquer à d'autres menaces existentielles plus graves telles que le changement climatique, sans parvenir à infuser un sentiment d'espoir dans notre vie politique et civique.

Heureusement, en la Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme, nous disposons déjà d'une feuille de route à même d'aider l'humanité à tracer une voie à suivre. La déclaration, adoptée par l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies en 1948, est tout aussi pertinente aujourd'hui qu'elle l'était à l'heure de la désolation qui a fait suite à la Deuxième Guerre mondiale.

L'Article premier de la déclaration stipule cette vérité inoubliable à la clarté éclatante : « Tous les êtres humains naissent libres et égaux en dignité et en droits. » Pour concrétiser cette vision aujourd'hui, nous devons pousser les dirigeants à aller au-delà des belles paroles et à s'engager à prendre des mesures significatives, réalisables et mesurables. En particulier, ils doivent assurer une distribution mondiale équitable des vaccins contre la COVID-19 et fournir un soutien financier adéquat aux pays les plus vulnérables aux ravages du changement climatique.

Tout d'abord, les pays à revenu élevé doivent prendre des mesures pour atteindre l'objectif de mécanisme de garantie de marché pour les vaccins Gavi COVAX, qui consiste à fournir au moins un milliard de doses de vaccin aux pays les plus pauvres au plus tard le 1er septembre 2021 et plus de deux milliards de doses d'ici la mi-2022.

Il est à la fois moralement injuste - en termes sanitaires et économiques - et myope pour les pays riches de thésauriser les vaccins COVID-19 pour leurs propres populations. Plus le coronavirus persistera et mutera dans les pays les plus pauvres dotés de moins de ressources, plus l'humanité dans son ensemble devra lutter longtemps pour vaincre la menace contre la vie et les moyens de subsistance de ses populations.

Dans le même esprit, les dirigeants du G7 et du G20 doivent soutenir les appels lancés à l'Organisation mondiale de la santé et à l'Organisation mondiale du commerce en faveur d'une autorisation volontaire et d'un transfert de technologie pour la production de vaccins. À défaut, ils doivent soutenir une renonciation immédiate à certains droits de propriété intellectuelle en vertu des règles de l'OMC - une mesure que le président américain Joe Biden a récemment soutenue.

Malheureusement, lors de leur récent sommet au Royaume-Uni, les dirigeants du G7 n'ont pas su saisir l'ampleur de leur responsabilité dans la lutte contre les inégalités exacerbées par la pandémie. Plus largement, la COVID-19 a mis en évidence les lacunes du nationalisme étroit et

des politiques populistes qui dédaignent les preuves scientifiques et l'empathie. Aucun pays, peu importe sa puissance ou sa taille, ne peut venir à bout efficacement de la menace de santé publique par ses propres moyens.

Il est fondamental que les dirigeants tirent les leçons de leurs erreurs passées et écoutent les recommandations experts du Groupe indépendant sur la préparation et la riposte à la pandémie (GIPR). Seuls des systèmes de santé correctement financés, intégrés et organisés seront capables de résister aux futures pandémies et aux urgences sanitaires.

Cependant, en l'état actuel des choses, les échecs des pays riches dans la lutte contre la COVID-19 ont augmenté le déficit de confiance entre le Nord et le Sud. Cela va compliquer la conclusion d'un accord lors de la prochaine réunion diplomatique internationale cruciale : le sommet COP26 sur le climat à Glasgow en novembre.

Tous les pays doivent renforcer leurs objectifs de réduction des émissions à court terme avant la COP26 - et nous attendons toujours que les principaux pays émetteurs prennent des mesures en ce sens. En outre, les pays riches doivent rétablir la confiance en montrant comment ils vont augmenter leurs contributions au financement du climat (notamment par une plus grande part consacrée à l'adaptation), pour fournir les 100 milliards de dollars par an promis à long terme pour aider les pays en développement à lutter contre le réchauffement climatique et ses effets.

Deux fils conducteurs traversent les défis communs auxquels nous sommes confrontés dans la défense des droits de l'homme, la lutte contre la pandémie et la crise climatique : la nécessité de faire preuve de vigilance contre la complaisance et la responsabilité d'agir en vue du bien commun. En ces moments difficiles, nous pouvons tous nous inspirer d'un dirigeant qui n'a jamais faibli dans son engagement envers les droits de l'homme et la justice : Nelson Mandela.

Il est ironique de constater que la Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme a été adoptée l'année même où l'Afrique du Sud a établi son régime d'apartheid. Mais Mandela a immédiatement perçu le pouvoir et le potentiel de cette déclaration. Dans son allocution de 1997 en tant que président de l'Afrique du Sud, il a déclaré que « Pour tous les opposants à ce système pernicieux, les mots simples et les belles paroles de la Déclaration universelle étaient une lueur d'espoir soudaine dans l'un des moments les plus sombres de notre histoire ».

Aujourd'hui plus que jamais, nous devons redécouvrir et réaffirmer les principes de solidarité et d'effort commun de la déclaration que Mandela a si fortement articulée tout au long de sa vie. Notre tâche actuelle ne consiste pas à « reconstruire mieux », car nous ne pouvons pas nous appuyer sur un statu quo ante qui a produit des systèmes inégalitaires et dysfonctionnels. Nous devons plutôt « reconstruire mieux en vue de l'avenir », en mobilisant nos efforts avec espoir, discipline et détermination pour construire un monde durable, pacifique et juste pour les générations futures.



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A NOTE OF CONDOLENCE

To The Varmah & McGill Families
 Following the Death of Ma Watta Varmah
 Mother of Honorable Nathaniel F. McGill
 MINISTER OF STATE FOR PRESIDENTIAL AFFAIRS



JUNE 26, 2021

Today we have received with deep sadness news of the unfortunate passing of Madam Ma Watta Varmah, Mother of the Honorable Minister of State for Presidential Affairs, Nathaniel McGill. Mother Ma Watta Varmah succumbed to the cold hands of death earlier today.

I came to know her personally and we created a special bond.

On behalf of First Lady Mrs. Clar Marie Weah, the entire Weah family and in my own name, I extend my profound sympathy to the bereaved family. The deceased offered invaluable counsel, especially during the 2017 elections whenever we stopped by her house. She was a loving and wonderful woman.

She was one of the biggest supporters of the Coalition for Democratic Change, and we cannot thank her enough for all her contributions.

Her passing has created a deep void in our hearts.

We pray that the Lord consoles the McGill family and all Liberians afflicted in similar manner.

May her soul and the souls of all faithful departed rest in perfect peace and may light perpetual shines upon them.

H.E. George Manneh Weah
 PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

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Partners call for enough funding

The Ambassador of Sweden to Liberia and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative here have called on the Government of Liberia to go beyond reaffirming the importance of decentralization, and make adequate budgetary allocations for County Service Centers, stressing that this would reassure citizens and development partners alike, that the train has left the station and is well on its way to its destination.

“When administrative decentralization is matched with fiscal decentralization, Liberia will be able to achieve something that no short term donor-funded projects can do - the country will find a path to accelerated and sustained local development, bringing long-term benefits to all its people in all its counties. And that is the best way to ensure that No One is Left Behind”, they advised.

In an Op-ed that they co-authored, both Sweden Ambassador Ingrid Wetterqvist and UNDP Resident Representative Stephen Rodriques note that experience from across the world shows that decentralization, when implemented properly, is one of the most powerful and effective tools to reduce poverty and inequality, accelerate rural

improving service delivery, and deepening social cohesion in order to spur local economic growth.

Amb. Wetterqvist and Country Rep. Rodriques say faced with slow adoption of the necessary laws, the government instituted a strategy to innovatively decentralize provision of services to citizens through the County Service Centers (CSCs).

“The vision behind the programme was that any resident should be able to walk into a CSC and access basic services such as obtain a birth certificate, pay property taxes, get a motor vehicle driver’s license, acquire a deed for their land, and so forth”, they explained, adding that some of these services, like obtaining a birth certificate can further enable citizens to acquire a legal identity which, in turn, can facilitate their access to other rights and services.

The CSCs are also meant to improve citizens’ interaction with government institutions, help increase public awareness of government policies and regulations, and strengthen citizens’ oversight of the use of public resources, according to both diplomats, noting that they also are an important vehicle for ensuring that no one is left behind, a key principle for attaining the Sustainable Development Goals.



development, and enhance the participation of citizens in their own development.

They describe Government of Liberia county service centers across the country as one-stop shops that enable citizens to access a variety of public services under one roof without having to travel to Monrovia.

“Studies of decentralization programmes on the continent and elsewhere (Tanzania, Uganda, Indonesia, India, etc.)” they said, “have highlighted the impact that decentralised administrations can have on unlocking the potential of regions, improving services to people, and stimulating citizen participation in decision-making.”

The County Service Center is a program introduced by the Government of Liberia during the administration of former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as part of a government decentralization policy to take services to citizens in all 15 counties of the country.

The two foreign envoys explain that as part of an effort to bring services closer to the people, the Government of Liberia, in 2012, initiated a national decentralization programme aimed at enhancing citizen participation in governance, reducing inequality,

According to them, after President George Weah took office in 2017, one of his early actions in support of decentralization was to sign the Local Government Act in 2018, providing the legal framework for decentralized service delivery, which they describe as an important milestone for giving ordinary citizens voice and space to participate in the country’s governance. “It was also a step in the direction of solidifying local accountability and discouraging corruption and misuse of resources.”

Amb. Wetterqvist and Country Rep. Rodriques: From our respective visits around the country, there are clear signs that the model works. Some CSCs that we have seen are delivering much needed services locally, and are saving citizens the considerable time and money they would normally expend to obtain those same services by travelling to Monrovia. Citizens are also having various meetings with local officials in the CSCs, a sign of deepening engagement and participation.”

Prior to the introduction of the policy, government services had been centralized in Monrovia, constraining citizens in the counties to come to the

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Ellen bemoans UK aid cuts

Little did former President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf know that her advocacy against continuous UK aid cuts to poor countries would have subjected her to internet trolling on Wednesday July 14.

In her post as one of her regulars, Mrs. Sirleaf laments the UK parliament's action in approving a continued reduction in spending on foreign aid by the English Government, arguing that these cuts will have a negative impact on millions of people in poor countries like Liberia who depend on them.

Furthermore, Mrs. Sirleaf noted that most of the countries to be affected have deep historical relationships with the UK.

Mrs. Sirleaf: "I'm saddened to see that the UK parliament has approved a continued reduction in spending on #foreignaid. These cuts will have a negative impact on millions of people in less wealthy nations—many of which have deep historical relationships with the UK. #UKaid"

But it appears that her advocacy this time around did not go down well with many of her followers particularly those on the continent who believe that they elect their leaders to change the dynamics not to continue on handouts from western countries.

Emmett P. Chea @Chea2024: replying to @MaEllenSirleaf: Ma Ellen, let's me disagree with you here small. #Foreign_aid has not developed any nation according to my findings. I think we elected Leaders to Change the dynamic. Are you saying it's impossible for African to be independent? Where are the sovereignties? Our focus should be...

Sulaiman A Bangura @SulaimanABangu3 replying to @MaEllenSirleaf: African Leaders relying on this foreign aids, are some of reasons why African are still been remote control by these Western countries bcs, (because) they're fully aware that most of our Leaders depend on these donor's. The West will give this aid and also provide you detectives and the expertise as to how these aids should be implemented.

MACSHINE MWEEMBA K W A M E N K R U M A H @MweembaMacshinereplying to @MaEllenSirleaf: It's sad how our miseducated Leaders are still believing that aid could be a catapult to the development of Africa. Afrika does not need any aid. Who bewitched us Afrika?

Mustapha Bah Paasewe @BahPaasewereplying to @MaEllenSirleaf: It's better for poorer country to move away from aid to trade.

Gratiano Nyuma @GratianoNyuma1: This is good but most poorer countries are yet to be independent from #ForeignAid

Determine Mind@AbrahamASwaray7 replying to @MaEllenSirleaf: Perhaps monies given are not being used for the intended purpose(s). This is why the UK is taking this trend.

Aburek Eric Ongodia @AburekOreplying to @MaEllenSirleaf: We don't need aid your Excellency! Training our people in self-reliance is important

Nathaniel Zumo @nathaniel_zumo replying to @MaEllenSirleaf: No one or a nation should live on another

CHIJOKE IBEH @Chijiokelbeh87 replying to @MaEllenSirleaf: What aid are you talking about because we can't see the impact of any aid from UK to any nation .You all must just stop fooling yourselves. Set nations free and no one will need any aid or disturbing anyone for loan . Biafra is a nation that is supposed to be independent. Be wise

Francis Skollie1 @FSkollie1replying to @MaEllenSirleaf: Africa and Africans must STOP living on Hands-out especially from foreign aids and work with their own hands and minds. AFRIAC, RISE!!!

okn@KasNwukereplying to @MaEllenSirleaf: Cuts will have a negative impact...really? Aid cuts will not have as negative an impact on the lives of millions



person's earnings forever, it's time to re-think especially for African nations.

Bishop Washington George @BishopWashingt9 replying to @MaEllenSirleaf: Let least worthy nation's learn to be independent, and utilize their resources well

MasangoMasangoFlag of ZimbabweFlag of United KingdomFlag of Israel @MasangpStewart

replying to @MaEllenSirleaf: Africa we are on Our Own!!!Man shruggingManshruggingMan shrugging

The Peaceful Warrior @GikimaAlexreplying to @MaEllenSirleaf: Until when will we continue depending on foreignaid?

Ing. BUNDU @Alimamybundu4 replying to @MaEllenSirleaf and @RichardHoney: Dead aid

Eric Asare @asareachereplying to @MaEllenSirleaf: Ma Ellen, I am also sad to read this statement from you. I see you be a great influence person on the African continent. Ma do you tell your colleague leaders to still go for aid? Why Africa what have we done to have such persons as our leaders

of Africans as corruption and incompetence. Perhaps you should focus more on African corruption and incompetence than on the sovereign decision of the UK to cut aid

Wonutee@Wonutee1replying to @MaEllenSirleaf: Twelve years of leadership, and you still calling your country less wealthy because of #foreignaid. Respect yorself my oldma(voice of Liberia)

Joseph N. S. Nimley @JosephNSNimleyreplying to @MaEllenSirleaf: Ma Ellen you helped to damaged Africa and our Country's Mama Liberia mostly! So close up and shout up your mouth from local, National and International politics....you're old so all your thoughts are old.Africa can stand on her own with Foreign Aid.

Steven O. Johnson @StevenOJohnson1replying to @MaEllenSirleaf :Oldma,let Less wealthy nations stop relying on foreign aid from the UK.... Lazy Nations!!

patNjwomana @PatrickNjwomanreplying to @MaEllenSirleaf :Madam President, I disagree with this

tweet. It appears you're on the wrong side of the international system. You are trying to promote #neocolonialism asking the UK Parliament to do what you are suggesting.

Benjamin D. Yeagar @BenjaminDYeagarreplying to @MaEllenSirleaf: Our Foe President post reflects majority of African leaders like herself. We think without Foreign Aid, we can't progress.

marrinbropleh @martinbropleh replying to @MaEllenSirleaf: With all the aids u received during ur stay in power what did u do? But u said concerning ur son stealing our money was u take responsibility. If I am right doing ur terms in office u received the highest aids ever in Liberia history. But what did u do?

Demelza Monger @DemelzaMongerreplying to @MaEllenSirleaf: The millions you mean the bank accounts of corrupt politicians?

But there were some who acknowledged her advocacy though:

Alfred D. Newman @AlfredDNewman5 Replying

to @MaEllenSirleaf: Sincerely placed

New Beginnings @zankpayaireplying to @MaEllenSirleaf: Please do not be Madam Sirleaf. There is no such thing as "less wealthy nations", it is only what these nations are believing. Honestly, genuine development cannot come from foreignaids. Hard work, resources development and accountability are the best way.

Boima C. J Toure@BoimaCJToure5 replying to @MaEllenSirleaf: You have said it all EJS. I hope that the UK Parliament will rethink this decision.

Martinez94@Martinez9420 replying to @MaEllenSirleaf: On the table for those who are not innovative. She might be wrong to use a certain phrase but remember, she is advocating. And one more thing..... Liberians don't forget you said she was not successful in bringing economic development but she led the struggle for peace and....

Martinez94@Martinez9420 Replying to @MaEllenSirleaf: Stability and she was successful. I hope the current government could pick up the struggle from when it is now and stop blaming past leader for the weakness of ourselves!!!

Partners call for

Cont'd from page 10

capital for nearly all services, including marriage and birth certificates, land deeds processing, obtaining driver's license and business registration, among others.

They say the CSCs are the product of a fruitful partnership between the Government of Liberia and a number of international development partners, namely the Government of Sweden, UNDP, USAID and the EU, all of which have provided technical and financial support in establishing CSCs in all 15 counties, saying, "Our collective efforts have also included training CSC staff to provide quality services to citizens, and developing policies and legal frameworks to sustain decentralization."

However, the foreign diplomats note that despite the progress made, more work remains to be done to strengthening decentralization, increasing citizen participation, and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in the counties.

Both authors recommend that to start with, the successes recorded to date must be anchored in firmer legal and regulatory frameworks, citing that for example, the current draft Revenue Sharing Bill would give counties the authority to collect and retain a greater

share of revenues, better meet their operating costs, and make critical investments in improving services and accelerating development at the local level.

The Governance Commission and the Ministry of Internal Affairs are leading the work on this Bill which, they believe, could be a potential game changer in terms of improving services to people and facilitating growth in rural and under-developed regions of the country.

"This process will require all hands to be on deck to ensure that the envisioned law is developed in consultation with, and participation of all stakeholders, both at the national and county levels. Citizens and civil society organizations should use the avenues provided to give their views and be ready to advocate for the adoption of the Bill when it is presented for vote in the Legislature."

They also call on the Liberian Legislature to see this as an opportunity to debate and pass the necessary laws that can help to ensure that the needs of the citizens are met where they live.

Messi, Barcelona agree to contract with significant pay cut



Lionel Messi and FC Barcelona have agreed to a new five-year deal that would keep the forward at the club with a significant wage cut, ESPN reported.

Messi became a free agent this summer after his contract expired. Paris Saint-Germain and Manchester City, whose manager Pep Guardiola led Messi's Barcelona squads from 2008 to 2012, courted the six-time

Ballon d'Or winner after he expressed desire to leave Catalonia. This came after an 8-2 loss to Bayern Munich in the Champions League last August.

The Argentinian's previous contract was worth over €500 million (\$594 million) and that expired on July 1.

An official announcement is expected in the coming days, ESPN reported.

Club President Joan Laporta hoped to finalize an agreement before the contract expired but

the club's finances made the move difficult. Messi's lower salary, player transfers and budget cuts helped alleviate the concerns and comply with Financial Fair Play rules.

Financial Fair play was introduced by UEFA to prevent clubs from spending beyond their means and reduce unsustainable debt. Clubs can spend up to €5 million (\$5.9 million) more than they earn every assessment period or three years.

According to ESPN, Barcelona's spending limit has been reduced from over €600 million (\$709 million) to €347 million (\$410 million) since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Laporta replaced Josep Maria Bartomeu, who resigned in October before a vote of no confidence. Laporta was Barcelona's president when Messi made his first-team debut.

Messi joined Barcelona's academy in 2000 and has made 778 appearances for the club. He holds the club record for most appearances and goals (672).

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