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# Huge ammunition discovered in Ganta



Flashback: A pictorial of guns smuggled to Liberia



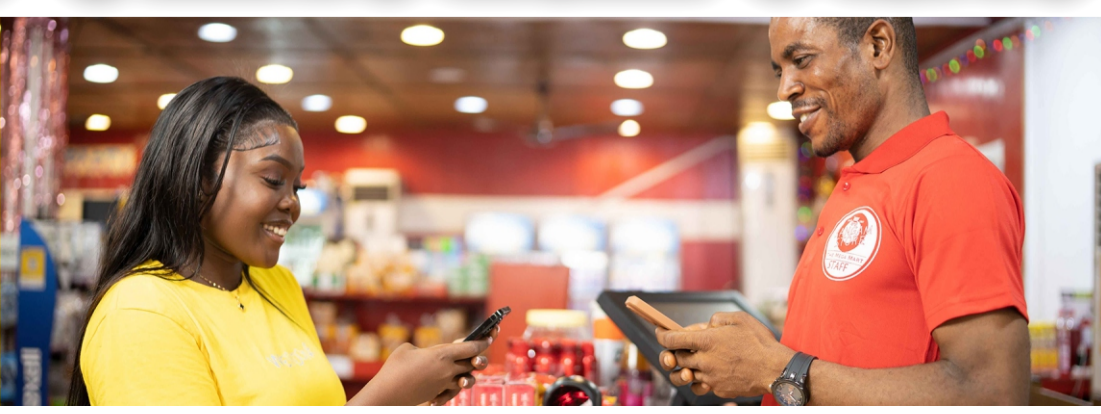
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# Presidential hopeful pushes Christian state

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# Continental News

## Big protests over Ethiopia move to dissolve forces

Huge protests have taken place in Ethiopia's Amhara region for the fifth consecutive day against government moves to dissolve a paramilitary

The government announced last week that it wants the special forces to be integrated into the federal army or police force in order to promote national unity. The decision has faced strong opposition in Amhara, with huge protests in

In the capital Addis Ababa, the arrest of Amhara-linked journalists, commentators and community organizers has intensified in recent days. On Sunday, Meskerem Abera became the fourth media personality to be detained in less than a week.

The Amhara special forces helped the Ethiopian army fight Tigrayan forces who launched a rebellion in 2020 against Mr Abiy's government. The conflict ended with the signing of a peace accord last year between the federal government and Tigrayan forces.

Now tension is growing between the Amhara and federal authorities.

Some in Amhara say the federal government's decision will prevent the region from providing armed resistance to any future threat.

They also doubt that the Tigrayan forces have fully disarmed, despite the peace accord requiring them to do so.

There have been historic tensions between the Amhara and Tigrayan ethnic groups, with the two often competing for power, land and



Amhara forces played a crucial role in the war against Tigrayan rebels

force. Demonstrators blocked roads with rocks and burning tyres to prevent the military from travelling around.

Protesters fear that the government's decision would leave them exposed to attacks by neighbouring regions.

Ethiopia's regional states have their own special forces to protect their borders, and to fight rebels.

cities and towns across the region. It has led a partial curfew being imposed in the historic city of Gondar, while clashes have been reported between protesters and the military in Kobe town, near the border with the neighbouring Tigray region.

On Sunday, Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed vowed to press ahead with his plan even if "a price had to be paid".

## Boat With 400 Migrants Adrift Between Greece, Malta

A vessel with around 400 people on board is adrift between Greece and Malta and is taking on water, support service Alarm Phone said Sunday, after a sharp rise of migrant boats crossing the Mediterranean from North Africa.

Alarm Phone said on Twitter they had received a call from the boat, which departed from Tobruk, in Libya, overnight and that they had informed authorities. But authorities had not launched a rescue operation so far, they added.

Alarm Phone said the boat was now in the Maltese Search and Rescue area (SAR). German NGO Sea-Watch International said on its Twitter account it had found the boat with two merchant ships nearby. It said the Maltese authorities had ordered the ships not to carry out a rescue and that one of them was just asked to supply it with fuel. It was not immediately possible to reach Maltese authorities for comment.

Alarm Phone said people on board were panicking, with several of them requiring

medical attention. The vessel was out of fuel and its lower deck was full of water, while the captain had left and there was nobody who could steer the boat, they said.

Another NGO, Germany's RESQSHIP, said Sunday at least 23 migrants died overnight in the Mediterranean in a separate shipwreck.

It said on Twitter the NGO found 25 people in the water during a rescue operation, and its staff were able to recover 22

survivors and two bodies, although it was told about 20 other people that had already drowned. Last week 440 migrants were rescued off Malta after a complex 11-hour operation in stormy seas by the Geo Barents vessel of the Doctors Without Borders (MSF) charity.

At least 23 African migrants were missing and four died Saturday after their two boats sank off Tunisia as they tried to reach Italy. VOA



Rescued migrants look out to sea on the Geo Barents rescue ship, operated by Medecins Sans Frontieres

## Dozens killed in 'barbaric' Burkina Faso attacks

Some 44 people have been killed after two deadly attacks in northern Burkina Faso on Thursday, officials have said.

The twin attacks happened in the villages of Kourakou and Tondobi in the Sahel region, near the Niger border.

No group has admitted to carrying out the attacks, but jihadist violence is common in the area and officials have blamed "armed terrorist groups". Militant groups linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS) are known to operate in the region.

The Lieutenant-Governor of the Sahel region, Rodolphe Sorgho, said the assailants behind the "despicable and barbaric attack" had been

AFP has also reported that the killings were in retaliation for the lynching of two jihadists who had tried to steal cattle a few days earlier. Thursday night's killings happened close to the village of Seytenga, where dozens of people were killed last June.

Burkina Faso and its neighbours have faced protracted jihadist insurgencies since 2013.

Thousands of people have been killed during the crisis and more than two million have been displaced. The violence has led to significant political turbulence in the country.

The military - led by Lt Col Paul-Henri Damiba - seized power in the country in January last year, promising an end to the violence.

But he failed to stamp out the attacks, and he was removed in a second coup by Capt Ibrahim



Burkina Faso's new military chief has vowed to step up efforts to counter jihadist violence in the country

"put out of action". Other villagers were reportedly injured in the attacks, but it is unclear how many. Mr Sorgho said "actions to stabilise the area are under way".

One resident told the AFP news agency that "a large number of terrorists burst into the village" and that he heard gunfire all night long. "It was on Friday morning that we saw that there were several dozen dead," he said.

Traoré the following September.

Capt Traoré has promised to win back territory from the jihadists, and to hold democratic elections in July 2024. BBC

His new military chief, Col Celestin Simpore, vowed earlier this week to step up a "dynamic offensive" to counter the jihadists.

But Capt Traoré has also requested that French troops leave the country and there has been widespread speculation that he might start working with Russian mercenaries. BBC

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# EDITORIAL

## Liberians should applaud themselves

ALL ELIGIBLE voters who went out to participate in Phase I of the biometric voter's registration conducted by the National Elections Commission in six counties that ended on April 9, 2023, without any violent disruption should pat themselves on the back for not just responding to a civic duty but demonstrating love for country.

PHASE I of the exercise that ended on Sunday, 9 April started on March 20, 2023. It was conducted in Montserrado, Margibi, Grand Bassa, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount and Gbarpolu counties. The 2nd Phase coming up from 21 April to 11 May 2023 will cover River Cess, Sinoe, Grand Kru, Maryland, River Gee, Grand Gedeh, Nimba, Bong and Lofa counties, respectively.

THE SUCCESSFUL completion of the first phase has set the tone for what should be expected of the last phase of the BVR process in preparation for presidential and general elections in October.

THE NEC had promised a fair, transparent, and faster BVR process and explained that the real objective is to register all Liberians 18 years and above ahead of the poll. Voters are playing their part in the democratic process and should be commended for the manner in which they generally conducted themselves in the past 20 days, though there were few technical problems, including attempts by handful of dishonest individuals to act smart, the NEC, with support of the security was on top of its game.

IT IS important that Liberians keep on the path of peaceful BVR, void of violence as the second phase starts on 21 April in the remaining nine counties. A successful process will not just bring us pride but demonstrate to the world that we as a people, are ready to move on.

DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS provide unique opportunity for citizens to choose their national leaders, under a social contract with the understanding that those so elected, would seek their welfare, including joy and security. Anything short of such expectations is a gross betrayal of the people's trust.

WHILE WE hail citizens for coming up to register in order to vote on October 10th, politicians seeking power should not take the electorate for granted after they shall have ascended to office.

RECENT EXPERIENCES and even those from the past, indicate that Liberians are not happy with the way those they elect govern the country. People are lamenting over corruption in the public sector that continues to deprive the citizenry of improved education, health and other social services, including security.

GETTING ELECTED to public offices is not, and should not be for personal benefits, but for public service. It should be about improving the standard of life of the electorate other than lording over them.

THEREFORE, IT goes without saying that as Liberians register to go to the poll, they should reflect deeply and think soberly before casting their ballots, for the power lies in the hands thru their votes in deciding who should lead them for the next six years. This power should not be exercised recklessly.

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# COMMENTARY

By Mariana Mazzucato

## Getting Drug Development Right

LONDON - As political theater, it would be hard to beat US Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders' recent grilling of Moderna CEO Stéphane Bancel, who was forced to explain why his company has quadrupled the price of its COVID-19 vaccine. But while Sanders is right that Moderna owes its vaccines to billions of dollars of US taxpayer support, its decision to raise the price should come as no surprise. As I warned in March 2020, drug companies will always make a killing from crises like the pandemic, and US taxpayers will always be gouged, until we fix an obviously broken system.

In those early days of the pandemic, the US federal government could have set a powerful precedent by aligning its vaccine investments with common-good principles such as equitable access and affordability. But it chose "business as usual" instead, and now we are witnessing the predictable results: Moderna is doing everything it can to maximize profits and shareholder value, even if that comes at the expense of public health. It claims that it is raising the price for its vaccine to make up for lost revenues; but its vaccine is the fruit of collective intelligence.

The US National Institutes of Health not only invested billions in the discovery of the vaccine; it also holds patents for the foundational mRNA modifications on which the Moderna vaccine relies. After several years of patent disputes, the NIH agreed to license its technology to Moderna for \$400 million. From Moderna's perspective, it was a great deal. That \$400 million returned \$36 billion back in global sales, a windfall reflected in enormous compensation packages for its executives. During the pandemic, Bancel himself sold \$400 million in shares, and his golden parachute (what he will receive if the company is sold and he is ousted) was raised to almost \$1 billion, a 100-fold increase from 2019.

Sanders is right to highlight the \$1.7 billion in government assistance that Moderna received for developing its COVID-19 vaccine, and to condemn the company's unjustified price hikes. Drug and vaccine pricing should reflect the full costs of research, development, manufacturing, and supply, and in this case, that includes substantial public contributions to R&D.

But the problems with business as usual do not stop at excessive CEO pay or the privatization of gains funded by taxpayer dollars. Moderna has also refused to share its technology with others, including the South African mRNA Technology Transfer Hub, an initiative aimed at accelerating vaccine development in middle- and low-income countries. While Moderna did pledge to refrain from enforcing patent protections during the pandemic, excessive patenting is still a massive potential barrier to the development and distribution of treatments for other diseases, such as HIV and cancer.

Concrete measures are needed to ensure that lifesaving vaccines are available and free at the point of use in all health-care systems. Protecting public health requires a fundamentally different innovation environment than the one we have, because it depends on all players working together in dynamic ways to share knowledge and accelerate progress. Health-sector governance should promote collaboration and solidarity between countries, not encourage competition and gatekeeping in the development of lifesaving products. The pandemic has already

demonstrated why we need such a shift in perspective.

With a common-good approach, the state, businesses, and communities would come together to agree on the rules and obligations pertaining to ownership and knowledge-sharing, guided by the goal of maximizing the benefits to global health. This calls for an entirely new governance framework that systematically steers innovation and knowledge toward attaining specific societal goals.

Guaranteeing affordability and access is essential. There is little public value in creating vaccines that are so expensive that only a limited number of people can access them. To prevent vested interests from unduly influencing policymaking, equitable access should be established as an explicit objective of the health-innovation process from the start.

Delivering on ambitious public-health missions will require governments to restore some balance between private incentives and the public interest, which implies the need to devise new legal blueprints for patents and other intellectual property. And to create more symbiotic partnerships, governments should redesign the foundational contracts on which public-private partnerships are built. Patent pools, pledges, or new licensing opportunities can all be used to foster more knowledge-sharing, and compulsory licensing could help countries make the best use of the knowledge that emerges from research.

More broadly, when companies benefit from public investments, those subsidies, guarantees, loans, bailouts, or procurement contracts should come with conditions designed to achieve the greatest public benefit. The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, for example, had to meet the condition of being storable at normal temperatures, which made it far easier to transport and distribute globally. By contrast, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine came with the market-discriminating feature of requiring storage between -80° and -60° Celsius.

Likewise, procurement contracts can be made conditional on knowledge-sharing, reinvestment of profits, or better working conditions for a firm's employees. As the "strings" attached to public funds, such conditions are the key to ensuring concrete social returns on investment.

The spread of infectious diseases like COVID-19 highlights the interconnectedness of the modern world and the importance of international coordination in achieving shared goals like health for all. Governments around the world should join efforts to impose firm rules on pharmaceutical companies' intellectual property, pricing, and manufacturing.

As the world's largest funder of health innovation and purchaser of medicine, the US government is uniquely positioned to steer the global economy toward a more inclusive and healthy future. But it will have to do more than just publicly shame pharma executives. They are operating in a system that has been designed for their benefit. When the system changes, so will their behavior.

Mariana Mazzucato, Founding Director of the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, is Chair of the World Health Organization's Council on the Economics of Health for All and a co-author (with Rosie Collington) of *The Big Con: How the Consulting Industry Weakens Our Businesses, Infantilizes Our Governments, and Warps Our Economies* (Penguin Press, 2023).



# OP-ED

By Antara Haldar

## Wanted: Vladimir Putin

**L**ONDON - The internet has recently been flooded with AI-generated images of Russian President Vladimir Putin being put on trial or incarcerated. But while the images are fake, international criminal justice is becoming a reality. On March 17, after years of being mired in controversy and crisis, the International Criminal Court surprised the world by formally indicting Putin and issuing a warrant for his arrest.

The ICC's specific charge - that Putin is responsible for the unlawful abduction and deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia, in violation of both the Rome Statute and the Geneva Conventions - addresses only a fraction of the offenses he has committed. Putin and his inner circle are morally, and probably legally, responsible for countless war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of genocide. Yet, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky observed, the warrant represents "a historic decision," not because it guarantees an arrest or trial, but because it sets a new precedent.

Although Putin is not the first sitting head of state to be indicted by the ICC - he shares this dubious distinction with despots like former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and the late Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi - he is certainly the most prominent. After all, unlike Russia, Sudan and Libya are not permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

To be sure, some skeptics have dismissed the warrant as being merely symbolic, noting that many leading global powers - including the United States, China, and India - are not even parties to the ICC. Russia itself does not recognize the authority of the court (the Kremlin declared the warrant "null and void"), and the Russian constitution prohibits the extradition of its citizens. As a nuclear power and a major global supplier of hydrocarbons, Russia has ample means with which to threaten anyone who seeks to bring its leaders to justice. Former Russian President Dimitri Medvedev has already mused about launching missile strikes on the ICC building in the Hague.

Yet it is indisputable that ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan has broken new ground, shaking up the long-running debate among legal scholars about whether international law really counts as law. For most states, might ultimately makes right, which is why the nineteenth-century positivist legal theorist John Austin referred to international law as "law improperly so called." Even more moderate legal philosophers like H.L.A. Hart were suspicious of international law, referring to it as a "set of rules" rather than a "legal system."

Persistent doubts about the authority of international law stem from the fact that it typically plays second fiddle to national will. In the case of the Putin indictment, Ukraine has accepted the court's jurisdiction over its territory; but by choosing to assert its authority over a non-member state's nationals, the ICC is sending a message that consent to its jurisdiction is not decisive. Moreover, by challenging the dangerous, longstanding notion that heads of state should be immune from prosecution, the ICC is chipping away further at the centrality of state sovereignty.

Coming 13 months after Russia's unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the ICC's actions signal a decisive shift both in the war and in international law. Having been issued to raise awareness, increase vigilance, and "prevent future crimes," the warrant is intended to rouse the international community's moral imagination. But more than that, the act of specifying the crimes committed against the Ukrainian population is an important component of restorative justice.

The ICC's investigation into Russian war crimes was prompted by requests from around 40 of its 123 members, and the warrant now requires all members to detain Putin and hand him over to the Court if he sets foot on their territory. While the odds of this happening are low, the case of Slobodan Milošević, the former Yugoslavian president who died in ICC custody, demonstrates that the threat is not empty.

In the interim, Putin will be an even greater international pariah, substantially limited in his ability to take to the world stage. His attendance at the BRICS summit in South Africa in August or the G20 summit in India in September would create a vexing diplomatic dilemma for his hosts. The warrant forces the international community to pick sides (as the United States, Germany, and Japan have already done, in favor of the ICC), and it sends a clear message to other heads of state (not to mention Putin's cronies).

The ICC warrant is thus a rare moment of moral clarity for the international community. Among other things, it demonstrates to those in the Global South that its jurisprudence is not entirely lopsided - an understandable view given the past focus on African leaders and the failure to investigate possible war crimes committed by Western forces in Afghanistan and other countries.

But the ICC's future success will depend on whether it can consolidate its gains and dispel the West-versus-the-rest narrative that Putin is trying to leverage. The ICC must embrace true multilateralism and, as I have argued before, develop a genuinely global jurisprudence to maintain its legitimacy. International law is often compared to the Wild West, because there is no global sheriff. But regardless of whether Putin ends up in handcuffs, the ICC's "Wanted" poster represents a step in the right direction.

Antara Haldar is Associate Professor of Empirical Legal Studies at the University of Cambridge.

# OPINION

By Daron Acemoglu  
and Cihat Tokgöz

## To Reconstruct Turkey, Rebuild Its Democracy

**B**OSTON - The devastating earthquakes that killed more than 50,000 people in Turkey (and at least 7,000 in northern Syria) in February have exposed deep-rooted problems in the run-up to potentially epochal presidential and parliamentary elections on May 14. Turkey, it is now clear, needs more than a change of government; it needs a fundamental transformation of its politics and economy. That means confronting the hugely powerful construction lobby and attempting to rebuild the country's flailing democracy.

Though the earthquakes were acts of nature, the devastation they caused was the result of corruption within the construction industry and beyond. But this did not stop Turkey's strongman president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, from blaming the huge death toll on nature, even as he admitted that the authorities were caught off guard. The Turkish people have been asked to believe that everything is now under control, and that Erdoğan should be trusted with the post-disaster reconstruction.

Yet it is worth recalling that when Turkey suffered a major earthquake (7.6 on the Richter scale) in 1999, near the city of İzmit, the large death toll at the time (around 18,000) was rightly attributed to shoddy construction and poor urban planning. The government responded by adopting state-of-the-art building codes and regulations to prevent new construction in the highest-risk areas.

So why, then, did the latest earthquakes destroy more than 18,000 buildings and fatally damage another 280,000? The short answer is that building codes were not followed. Many of the recently decimated buildings were erected after 1999, but they were still unsafe (with weak foundations that did not use the minimum required amount of cement), because municipal governments and inspectors had given developers a pass.

Corruption is just one facet in the broader rise of Turkey's construction lobby over the last two decades. The construction industry now accounts for over 40% of total fixed-capital investment, and its political influence is even greater than these numbers would suggest. Construction companies are among the leading donors to all major political parties, and they maintain inappropriately close links with all municipal governments, regardless of which party is in control.

While construction-industry corruption is a major problem in many other countries as well, it is particularly pernicious in Turkey. Not only is the industry disproportionately large relative to the economy, but it is exploiting democratic institutions that have been severely weakened after two decades of Erdoğan's autocratic rule.

The Erdoğan government's bizarre 2018 "building amnesty" illustrates the construction lobby's power. The amnesty allowed owners to avoid having to demolish or retrofit buildings that were not up to code simply by paying an additional tax, even in the case of structures that had been erected along fault lines, wetlands, basins, and other high-risk areas.

In the ten provinces that suffered the worst devastation in the recent earthquakes, a staggering 294,000 buildings had received amnesty. While there currently are no definitive data with which to assess the lethality of amnesty, it is safe to assume that many of these buildings were among those that collapsed and killed their inhabitants. Turkey's 1999 "earthquake tax," which was increased by presidential decree in 2021, was supposed to finance improvements to strengthen buildings' resilience against seismic events. But there is considerable uncertainty about where these funds went.

With such a staggering death toll and hundreds of thousands left homeless, one might expect Turkish voters to turn out en masse against the government on May 14. But so far, at least, there is little evidence that the media and civil society are eager to hold national and municipal politicians accountable. Unlike in 1999, when most media outlets described the damage from the earthquake as a failure of governance, the near-total consensus in Turkish media today is that it was an "act of God," implying that Erdoğan and his government are blameless.

This type of coverage is no surprise, given that Erdoğan has gradually assumed almost direct control over all national media outlets, including TV channels and high-circulation newspapers. Open dissent has become increasingly dangerous: journalists are routinely jailed for critical reporting, and websites and social-media platforms have been closed for challenging Erdoğan.

Mounting repression had unintended consequences in February. Four months earlier, in October 2022, the parliament enacted a "censorship law" that significantly deepened online censorship. Using the new law, the government blocked access to social-media sites in the immediate aftermath of the earthquakes - inadvertently complicating rescue efforts.

This astonishing level of media control - and the polarization it has engendered - has left opposition parties and politicians struggling to get their message out to voters, especially when they try to highlight endemic corruption and government incompetence.

But even if a coalition of opposition parties can win, replacing the government will not fix Turkey's problems. The country's institutions need to be rebuilt, and that process cannot be completed unless the construction lobby is cut down to size.

While the odds of achieving transformational change may appear low, Erdoğan's control over the media and state institutions does not guarantee his re-election. There is a palpable desire for change among the electorate, even if it is not reflected in the media. One place to find it is in soccer stadiums. At recent matches for two of the country's most widely followed teams, thousands of fans chanted, "Lies, cheating, it's been 20 years, resign."

Of course, this story was underplayed by Turkish media, and pro-Erdoğan officials and journalists have tried to smear such dissent as terrorism. The clubs themselves have faced fines, and many of their fans have been barred from attending away games. Nonetheless, these views are not going away, and they could well be echoed widely at the ballot box.

Demands for political change can emerge from unexpected places, and when they do, they can offer hope to millions of others. That, more than a new government, is what true change requires. To rebuild Turkish democracy, Turks will need to remove Erdoğan, confront the construction lobby, and then get to work restoring essential institutions - perhaps starting with the news media.

Daron Acemoglu, Professor of Economics at MIT, is a co-author (with Simon Johnson) of the forthcoming *Power and Progress: Our Thousand-Year Struggle Over Technology and Prosperity* (PublicAffairs, May 2023). Cihat Tokgöz, a former senior investment banker in global financial institutions, is an author and analyst on Turkish economy and financial markets.



# ARTICLE

# ARTICLE

## 2023 Elections: Why we must respect the Code of Conduct

By S.Karweaye

On March 14, 2023, President George Weah issued Executive Order #117 mandating all appointed officials of the government aspiring to contest elective positions in the impending October 10, 2023, Presidential and Legislative Elections to resign on or before April 7, 2023.

According to the Executive Order, the president's action was per the amended Sections 5.2 and 10.2 of the 2014 Code of Conduct enacted, approved, and printed in handbills on December 29, 2022.

In March 2014, Liberia's legislature passed a National Code of Conduct (CoC) for all public officials and employees of the Government of Liberia. In 2022, the Liberian Legislature amended certain portions of the 2014 Code of Conduct, particularly Part V, sections 5.2 under Political Participation and Part-X 10.2 under Declaration and Registration of Personal Interests, Assets and Performance/Financial Bonds because those provisions were too high and unreasonable.

Before the amendment, section 5.2 states, "Wherein, any person in the category stated in section 5.1 herein above desires to canvass or contest for an elective public position, the following shall apply; a) Any Minister, Deputy Minister, Director-General, Managing Director and Superintendent appointed by the President pursuant to Article 56 (a) of the Constitution and a Managing Director appointed by a Board of Directors, who desires to contest for elective public office shall resign said post at least two (2) years prior to the date of such public elections."

In the revised portion of the code of conduct, Section 5.2 to be precise, public officers who wish to contest elections now have one year instead of two to resign before the next election. The amended portion states: "all officials appointed by the President, including all cabinet ministers, deputy, and assistant cabinet ministers, ambassadors, ministers consuls, superintendents of counties and other Government officials, both military and civilian, appointed by the President pursuant to Article 56(a) of the 1986 Constitution, and any managing director, deputy managing director, assistant managing director of a corporation owned by the Government of Liberia, any commissioner, deputy and assistant commissioner of any commission established by the Legislature, and any official of the Government who negotiates and executes contracts, procures goods and services, and/or manages assets for and on behalf of the Government of Liberia, who desires to canvass or contest for an elective public office within the Government of Liberia shall resign his or her position one (1) year before the date on which the election for the post for which he/she intends to contest."

Breaking it down, section 5.2 bars presidential appointees from actively participating in the presidential and legislative elections as a candidate without resigning one (1) year before the election date for the position for which he/she

intends to contest.

Why did the president of Liberia wait eight months before the legislative and presidential elections before issuing an Executive Order? Why are political appointees who have the ambition of contesting didn't resign one (1) year before the election? Is President Weah in violation of the laws of Liberia he was sworn to uphold and protect?

The premise of section 5.2 of the code of conduct in my view is deeply rooted in the most often-quoted idiom of one eating his cake and then seeking to have it back when the said cake has been absorbed into his system and is undergoing the process of digestion so that it can never be recovered forever. It is a world of one option for the presidential appointees, either to retain their current office or to seek elective office, but certainly, they cannot combine both.

A simple analysis is where a person has been appointed by the President as a Minister for one of many government

We must sanitize the electoral space to remove all vestiges of manipulation and land mines. It is not in our best interest for those that we pay to perform certain duties to abscond from their sacred responsibilities to actualize their ambitions to seek elective office. They owe us the duty of fairness to surrender our mandate granted to them through their appointments should they aspire to contest any election.

Section 5.2 of the Code of Conduct should be obeyed. It protects the electorate. The said provision has not precluded presidential appointees from becoming a member of a political party or voting in general elections. It only precludes them from contesting as a candidate in presidential and legislative elections without resigning one year before the election. Moreso, a presidential appointee does not hold the office as of right, but at the pleasure of the Chief Executive. Also, it is



ministries and she/he desires to be a member of the House of Senate or House of Representatives through the election and yet she/he wants to retain his position as a member of the executive whilst jostling to join the legislature. Liberia does not run a parliamentary system of government whereby the executive and the legislature coalesce together. It is called separation of powers. How will it feel, for instance, for a sitting Minister or head of Autonomous Agencies to seek to participate in any elective office either as a President, Senator, or representative, without first resigning his/her position as a member of the Executive? If the political appointee who seeks elective office is satisfied with his/her office, then why seek to jettison it?

In Liberia, presidential appointees are paid one form of emolument or allowance or the other by the government, with specific responsibilities to perform. Thus, even apart from the conflict of retaining an executive position and seeking elective office, how does a person occupying a political office abandon his responsibilities for which he is being paid to embark upon campaigns at the expense of the people? What justification can we give for retaining a person on the payroll of the government who already has his eyes on another assignment?

pertinent to state that most of these presidential appointees have ended up using their offices to intimidate political opponents of their principals during elections in a bid to retain their jobs.

Moreso, the Section of the Code of Conduct was designed to create a level playing ground for all aspirants during national elections. It is instructive to note that the Section does not in any way undermine the rights of political appointees to hold office or participate in national elections. Therefore, the National Election Commission (NEC) must adhere to the code of conduct by not certifying presidential appointees who have not "resigned his or her position one (1) year before the date on which the election for the post for which he/she intends to contest" not eight (8) months before the date of the election or else we may soon have in our hands a ridiculous situation whereby the Chairman of NEC or even the Governor of Central Bank of Liberia may seek to contest election whilst still holding on to their appointments. I rest my case.



# MORE HEADLINE NEWS

# MORE HEADLINE NEWS

## CEMESP train journalists on conflict sensitive electoral reporting

The Center for Media Studies, and Peacebuilding

The training funded by Open Society Initiative for West Africa is an activity under a grant to CEMESP titled: 'Building Institutional

reporters and editors to report on conflict issues in a well-researched, factual, and non-



Participants at the training in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County

(CEMESP) over the weekend concluded the training of 20 journalists drawn from various community radio stations, print and online media houses in Grand Bassa, Margibi, Sinoe, Grand Kru and Rivercess counties.

Held in Buchanan City Grand Bassa county, the workshop on conflict Sensitive Electoral reporting aimed at strengthening the capacity of community radio

biased way that can contribute to dialogue, mutual understanding and eventually reconciliation and peace.

Media entities that benefited from Friday's training include Radio Gbehzohn, Radio Dukpah, Ablejay Radio, Magic radio, LACSA Radio, Voice of Wee, DCN Radio, Rivercess Broadcasting System, Radio Kakata, Classic FM among others.

Resilience to Enhance Professional Media Coverage of the 2023 Elections in Liberia".

At the opening of the training workshop, Public Trust Media Group Managing Editor, Frank Sainworla told the participants it was necessary to be aware of what lies ahead as the "media has become an effective platform to contribute to the mitigation of

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 11

## Supreme Council reject Muslims' poll results

By: Naneka A. Hoffman

The Supreme Council for Imams and Mosques Affairs in Liberia, has rejected results of recent elections conducted by the National Muslim Council. Addressing a news conference over the weekend in Gardnersville Township, outside Monrovia, the Assistant Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Imams and Mosques Affairs, Vabole Donzo, described the entire election as illegal and unconstitutional.

According to him, Sheik Abubakar Sumaworo remains the legitimate Grand Motif of Liberia, and maintains the qualification and criteria to continue to serve in the position. Mr. Donzo continued that alleged gross violation of the Council's constitution has the propensity to cause confusion, chaos and division in the Islamic community in Liberia.

According to him, there is evidence of manipulations of the elections that subsequently led to the election of Chairman, Vice Chairman for Administration, Vice Chairman for Operation and Secretary General, all on white ballot.

manner in which the Islamic Jurists were selected was marred by fraud, favoritism and misapplication of the constitution of the National Muslim Council of Liberia.

He noted that recruitment process of members of the jurists without scrutiny of their

final vetting which should have been done by the national executive committee in coordination with the board of directors. The National Muslim Council of Liberia went to the poll on March 31, 2023 and elected Fumba Sheriff, Chairman; Mohamed Konneh, Vice Chairman for Administration; and Abdurahman Sow, Vice



Mr. Vabole Donzo in a news conference

credentials as required by the constitution led to recruiting people without degree in Islamic studies.

Donzo explained that qualified applicants were allegedly excluded from the exercise without any justification and that there was deviation of the selection of

Chairman for Operations.

Others elected include Amna Sheriff, Vice Person for Women Affairs; Kuku Reeves, Secretary General and Dr. Abbas Kanneh, Grand Motif of Liberia, replacing Sheik Abubakar Sumaworo. **Editing by Jonathan Browne**

## Unveiling the hidden story behind FGM Ban in Liberia

-Sup. Kamba appeals to Media for thorough investigation

By Kruah Thompson

The County Superintendent believes that it is not his responsibility to investigate and identify those who are violating the law at their local bushes in the county but calls on the media to help the government investigate and identify violators.

"The FGM is a law that was signed by representatives from the 15 counties, so what's the question? I think the Press need to take the responsibility to help the administration and government to investigate and identify those who are violating the law because every county was represented." he said adding "So, as far as I'm concerned, FGM is not being

with the practice extending to 11 counties from the previous 10.

Other than the temporary ban on FGM, there has never been any solid attempt at making FGM illegal in Liberia. The few cases that have gone through the justice system have been covered under Section 242 of the Penal Code which speaks to malicious and unlawful injuries towards another person by cutting off or otherwise depriving him or her of any of the members of his body, finding a person guilty of a felony. This is punishable by up to five years in prison.

Additionally, the punishments included rehabilitation and fines which are determined on a case-by-case basis – none of which deterred practicing communities.

Traditional leaders have significant power and influence



Lofa County Superintendent William Tamba Kamba has cautioned local media platforms in Liberia to investigate the recent ban on FGM.

practiced at our respective counties."

He made the statement responding to a question from our assigned reporter Thursday, April 7, 2023, at MICAT's regular briefing on Capital bypass.

In Liberia, the practice of FGM date back many centuries. Strong taboos surrounding the practice and associated Sande secret societies make tackling the practice challenging.

On her last day in office in 2018, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf signed an executive order on the Domestic Violence Bill to ban FGM on girls under 18 years old. However, the ban expired on February 2019.

The temporary ban on FGM was not as effective as initially anticipated during its one-year existence as a law. This was mainly due to a lack of knowledge of the existence of the ban and a lack of coordinated multi-sectoral implementation by state agencies.

With the Executive Order already in existence, the number of Sande bushes in Liberia increased drastically

over the Liberian community and often over policymakers. Once girls reach age 18, they will face immense pressure to undergo FGM to remain in the community.

In July 2011, the members of the politically influential Sande secret society who had kidnapped and forcibly subjected Ruth to FGM were sentenced to three years imprisonment; however, they appealed the judgment and were released on bail.

In March 2017, 16-year-old Zaye Doe died in the Tappita area in the Sande bush during forced mutilation. The traditional leaders (Zoes) subjected Zaye and 25 more girls to FGM despite the government ban on Sande Secret Society operations, including FGM at the time.

Also On 28 September 2021, Parker's 15-year-old daughter was abducted by traditional leaders in Liberia, known as the zoes, and taken from Mount Barclay, a town near the capital Monrovia, to the Sande Bush. There, she was forcibly initiated into the zoes' secret society. For these women, initiation includes female genital mutilation (FGM).



MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

County Superintendents heap praises on Weah

Presidential hopeful pushes Christian state

By Emmanuel wise Jipoh

A presidential hopeful in Liberia's pending 2023 elections, Allen Roosevelt Brown Jr., says he will redeem the country's

have any exclusive privilege or preference over any other, but all shall be treated alike.

However, Brown said his party was established on the principle of faith, and it has opened its doors to

way forward to ensure violence-free, fair, and transparent elections.

For his part, LRP National Chairman Gabriel Salee enjoined his political leader to restore the nation to a Christian State.

"We are a movement and we have the mandate to return the country ... to God. We will not rest, neither get tired until we achieve that mandate," Salee said.

He added: "We are happy that we have a selfless visionary who believes that the people of Liberia deserve better. Therefore, we are prepared to align with people who buy into our vision and have like minds of the kind of Liberia we envision."

Chairman Salee stressed that the fundamental truth about Liberia is that the country was established under Christian principles, but it has defaulted from its visions provided per the 1847 Constitution.

According to him, a revised 1986 Constitution has changed the dynamics of Liberia and made it a secular state.

He added that the previous Constitution was based on faith, explaining that the founding fathers came in and established a country that had no military and economic strength.

He said they trusted that the Almighty God built their value system on that foundation, and it is that foundation that he wants to continue to sustain.



Mr. Allen Roosevelt Brown Jr.

Christian faith if he is elected this October.

Addressing reporters in Monrovia recently, the Liberia Restoration Party (LRP) political leader stressed the need to return Liberia to a Christian state by using the trenches of politics.

Mr. Brown said Liberia was established on the fundamental pillar of Faith. The West African State is now a secular state based on its 1986 Constitution. "We are a movement and our movement is to restore the nation ... to God. I am so happy that the vehicle that we are using is politics", he said. Article 14 of the 1986 Constitution says in part that no religious denomination or sect shall

recruitment nearing the presidential and legislative elections.

Among plans, Mr. Brown noted that the LRP aims at improving the lives of Liberians, saying development and basic social services are its hallmarks to transforming the country.

He used the medium to disclose plans of making Liberia not only a breadbasket of Africa if elected president, but also ensuring that the West African State becomes a leading exporter across the world.

Additionally, Mr. Brown reacted to the recent signing of the Farmington River Declaration by 27 political parties here ahead of the 2023 elections. He said it is the best

Monie Captan in hot water with Court

-Judge Dixon demands retraction of demeaning comment

By Lincoln G. Peters

Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC) Board Chair Mr. Monie Captan is in a hot water with the court, as Criminal Court "C" Judge Blamo Dixon demands a retraction of a demeaning statement within 24 hours. "I am saying this for all to hear it. Anyone ... closer to Mr. Monie Captan, Chairman of the LEC should tell him to retract those negative comments that he made on OK FM," Judge Dixon said Monday, 10 April 2023 at the opening of the February Term of Court.

Judge Dixon accused Mr. Captan of making a demeaning statement against his personality.

"I give him 24 hours ultimatum to proceed to OK FM and retract those negative comments. It will interest you to note that Mr. Captan is a former Minister of Foreign Affairs in Liberia," Judge Dixon stated. He however

failed to state the negative comment made by Mr. Captan against his person. Judge Dixon explained that recently, he

me after he made those negative comments [that] defendant Victor also went to OK FM and clarified and rebutted what Mr. Captan said," Judge Dixon explained



Mr. Monie Captan

heard from a source that Mr. Captan went on the airwaves, particularly OK FM, and made comments about a case that he disposed of long ago involving a man only identified as Victor.

"I didn't listen to him directly when he made those statements. But, someone told

further.

According to Judge Dixon, there was a case some time ago concerning LEC for power thefts brought against one Victor Yuoh. He said he presided over that case from the beginning and put Victor on bond.

By: Kruah Thompson

Three County Superintendents have praised President George Weah for his efforts in promoting development in their respective regions, as they give an update on the developments in their areas.

The Superintendents highlighted the significant progress made in various sectors, including infrastructure, education, healthcare, and agriculture, attributing much of the success to the President's commitments to improving the lives of Liberians.

Speaking at the Ministry of Information Cultural Affairs and Tourism regular briefing on Thursday, April 6, 2023, Superintendent Esther Walkers of Bong County, Superintendent

Center in Boinsen District and an oxygen plant in Palala, Kpaai District Bong County, among others."

According to her, under the County Development Funds, a company by the name of Sesay and Son is constructing a 16M bridge. And that all of this can be traced back to the effort of President Weah.

Bong County is one of the largest counties in Liberia, with a population of over 350,000 people.

The government in collaboration with international partners, has made significant efforts to improve human capacity building in Bong County, particularly in the areas of education and healthcare.

Bong County is home to universities and colleges, including Cuttington University, Bong County Technical College, and United Methodist University. These institutions offer a range of degree



Pres. Weah

William Tamba Kamba Sr. of Lofa County, and Superintendent Jerry Varney of Margibi County praised the Liberian President for his ongoing efforts to accelerate development and promote inclusivity across Liberia's 15 counties.

Madam Esther Walkers Superintendent of Bong County says under the Weah administration the county was able to renovate 16 public schools and donated to the Ministry of Education 13.5 Acres of land for the construction of an Educational Duplex.

She added that the Government of Liberia provided the amount of nine hundred thousand United States Dollars for the completion of the Bong County technical college in Gbarnga City, Bong County.

She says that the government also donated five hundred thousand United States Dollars for the expansion of the C.B. Dunbar Comprehensive Hospitals. And constructed a regional testing center for MOH in Suakoko District in Bong.

"The government through MOH was able to construct a regional testing center in Suakoko District. They also dedicated Boinsen Health

and vocational programs, providing opportunities for young people to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the workforce.

The healthcare sector in Bong County has also seen significant improvements, with the construction of new hospitals and clinics, and the deployment of medical professionals to underserved areas.

NGOs such as USAID, UNICEF, and Save the Children have also played a significant role in promoting human capacity building in Bong County, supporting initiatives such as teacher training programs, community health worker training, and skills development programs for youth. Despite these efforts, challenges remain, including limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of skilled professionals in key sectors. For his part, Lofa Superintendent Mr. William Tamba Kamba Sr. acknowledged the President for what he described as providing leadership and guidance for the last five years in the country.

He says his administration has stirred the affairs of the country with peace and stability. He added



# Français

## Dévoiler l'histoire cachée derrière l'interdiction des MGF au Libéria

Le surintendant du comté de Lofa, William Tamba Kamba, a demandé aux plateformes médiatiques locales au Libéria d'enquêter sur la récente interdiction des Mutilation Génitales

gouvernement à enquêter et à identifier ceux qui violent la loi parce que chaque comté était représenté », a-t-il dit, puis ajouté « Donc, en ce qui me concerne, les MGF ne sont pas pratiquées dans nos comtés respectifs ».

interdisait les MGF. Cependant, l'interdiction a expiré en février 2019.

L'interdiction temporaire des MGF n'a pas été aussi efficace qu'initialement prévu au cours de son existence d'un an en tant que loi. Cela était principalement dû à un manque de connaissance de l'existence de l'interdiction et à un manque de mise en œuvre multisectorielle coordonnée par les agences d'État.

Même au moment où le décret présidentiel était en vigueur, le nombre de buissons de Sande au Libéria a considérablement augmenté, la pratique s'étendant dans 11 comtés au lieu des 10 précédents.

Hormis l'interdiction temporaire des MGF, il n'y a jamais eu de véritable tentative visant à rendre les MGF illégales au Libéria. Les quelques cas qui sont passés par le système judiciaire ont été couverts par l'article 242 du Code pénal qui traite des blessures malveillantes et illégales envers une autre personne en lui coupant ou en la privant d'une autre manière de l'un des membres de son corps, en trouvant une personne coupable d'un crime. Ceci est passible d'une peine pouvant aller jusqu'à cinq ans de prison.

De plus, les sanctions comprennent la réhabilitation et des amendes qui sont déterminées au cas

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 09



Féminines (MGF).

Le surintendant du comté estime qu'il n'est pas de sa responsabilité d'enquêter et d'identifier ceux qui violent la loi dans leurs buissons dans les comtés. Il appelle donc les médias à aider le gouvernement afin que les contrevenants soient exposés et jugés.

« La loi sur les MGF a été signée par des représentants des 15 comtés, alors quel est le problème ? Je pense que la presse doit prendre la responsabilité d'aider l'administration et le

Il a fait cette déclaration en réponse à une question de notre journaliste assigné le jeudi 7 avril 2023, lors du briefing régulier du MICAT sur le contournement de la capitale.

Au Libéria, la pratique des MGF remonte à plusieurs siècles. De forts tabous entourant la pratique et les sociétés secrètes Sande rendent difficile la lutte contre la pratique.

Vers la fin de son mandat en 2018, la présidente Ellen Johnson Sirleaf a signé un décret présidentiel sur le projet de loi sur la violence domestique faites aux filles de moins de 18 ans qui

## Nord du Mali : la médiation internationale tente à nouveau de relancer le processus de paix

Depuis fin décembre dernier, la quasi-totalité des groupes armés maliens du Nord signataires de l'accord de paix d'Alger en 2015 avec le gouvernement malien ont suspendu leur participation à cet accord. Ils pointent « l'absence persistante de volonté politique » des autorités maliennes.

Premier lot de 13 000 ex-combattants sur les 26 000 convenus, d'accorder les violons sur le volet « lancement des projets de fonds de développement », ou encore la mise à jour des arrangements sécuritaires sur le cessez-le-feu. Ce dernier point est important. Très récemment, un avion de l'armée malienne a survolé la ville de Kidal, au nord-est, contrôlé par les ex-rebelles.

Ces derniers ont tout de suite dénoncé « une violation du cessez-le-feu », et de son côté la mission de l'ONU au Mali s'est déclaré inquiète par ce regain de

tension sur le terrain.

On ne connaît pas encore officiellement la réaction des deux parties à cette initiative.



## Éditorial

### Nous nous félicitons des Libériens

Tous les électeurs qui sont sortis pour participer à la phase I de l'opération d'enrôlement biométrique des électeurs dirigée par la Commission électorale nationale devraient s'applaudir.

Terminée le 9 avril 2023, l'opération d'enrôlement biométrique des électeurs s'est déroulée dans six comtés sans aucune perturbation violente majeure. Les citoyens ont fait preuve de civisme et ont montré combien ils aiment leur pays.

Les comtés qui étaient concernés par la première phase sont : Montserrado, Margibi, Grand Bassa, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount et Gbarpolu. Tandis que La 2e phase qui se déroulera du 21 avril au 11 mai 2023 couvrira les comtés de River Cess, Sinoe, Grand Kru, Maryland, River Gee, Grand Gedeh, Nimba, Bong et Lofa.

L'achèvement réussi de la première phase donne ainsi le ton aux autres phases qui suivront en vue des élections présidentielles et générales d'octobre.

La NEC avait promis un processus équitable, transparent et plus rapide et a expliqué que le véritable objectif était d'enregistrer tous les Libériens de 18 ans et plus avant le scrutin. Les électeurs jouent leur rôle dans le processus démocratique. C'est pourquoi on doit les féliciter. La manière dont ils se sont généralement comportés au cours des 20 derniers jours, en dépit des quelques problèmes techniques est salubre.

Certes, il y a des cas où une poignée d'individus ont tenté d'être malins, mais la NEC, avec le support de la sécurité, a réussi à déjouer leurs plans machiavéliques.

Il est important que les Libériens continuent sur cette voie pacifique, sans violence. La deuxième phase commence le 21 avril dans les neuf comtés restants. Si le processus réussit, cela ne nous apportera pas que de la fierté, mais démontrera au monde que nous, en tant que peuple, sommes prêts à aller de l'avant.

Les élections démocratiques offrent une occasion unique aux citoyens de choisir leurs dirigeants, dans le cadre d'un contrat social, tout en espérant que les personnes ainsi élues recherchent leur bien-être, y compris la joie et la sécurité. Alors ne pas être à la hauteur de ces espérances est une trahison flagrante et constitue un abus de confiance.

Alors, pendant que nous saluons les citoyens qui sont venus s'inscrire pour voter le 10 octobre, les politiciens en quête de pouvoir ne devraient pas tenir l'électorat pour acquis après leur accession au pouvoir.

Les expériences récentes et même celles du passé indiquent que les Libériens ne sont pas satisfaits de la manière dont ceux qu'ils élisent gouvernent le pays. Les gens déplorent la corruption dans le secteur public, car elle continue de priver les citoyens d'une meilleure éducation, de la santé et d'autres services sociaux, y compris la sécurité.

Se faire élire à des postes publics n'est pas et ne devrait pas être pour des avantages personnels, mais pour le service public. Il devrait être question d'améliorer le niveau de vie de l'électorat plutôt que de le dominer.

Par conséquent, il va sans dire que lorsque les Libériens s'inscrivent pour se rendre aux urnes, ils doivent réfléchir profondément et sobrement avant de voter, car le pouvoir est entre leurs mains à travers leurs votes pour décider qui devrait les diriger pour les six prochaines années. Ce pouvoir ne doit pas être exercé avec imprudence.



# Français

## Le gouvernement du Libéria dément

par cas - dont aucune n'a dissuadé les communautés pratiquantes.

Les chefs traditionnels ont un pouvoir et une influence considérables sur la communauté libérienne et souvent sur les décideurs politiques. Une fois que les filles auront atteint l'âge de 18 ans, elles subiront une immense pression pour subir une MGF afin de rester dans la communauté.

En juillet 2011, les membres de la société secrète politiquement influente Sande qui avaient enlevé et soumis de force Ruth à des MGF ont été condamnés à trois ans d'emprisonnement ; cependant, ils ont fait appel du jugement et ont été libérés sous caution.

En mars 2017, Zaye Doe, 16 ans, est décédée dans la région de Tappita dans la brousse de Sande lors de mutilations forcées. Les chefs traditionnels (Zoes) ont soumis Zaye et 25 autres filles aux MGF malgré l'interdiction gouvernementale des

rituel pour mettre fin à la pratique des MGF dans toutes les régions du Libéria.

Dukureh, une survivante des MGF et du mariage des enfants, s'est rendue dans le pays du 19 au 27 novembre pour soutenir les efforts du gouvernement visant à mettre fin aux pratiques inhumaines contre les femmes et les filles. Et grâce à ses efforts, les MGF ont finalement été abolies le lundi 6 février 2023.

L'abolition définitive des pratiques de MGF au Libéria était conforme à l'engagement de Dukureh pris à l'issue d'une réunion consultative entre les chefs traditionnels tenue à Ganta, dans le comté de Nimba, en 2019.

Pendant ce temps, lorsque le surintendant du comté de Lofa, William Tamba Kamba, a été interrogé pour savoir si les habitants traditionnels du comté se confirmaient à la récente interdiction, le surintendant a plutôt appelé les plateformes médiatiques locales au Libéria à enquêter de manière approfondie pour voir par eux-mêmes si l'interdiction des MGF fonctionnait au niveau du comté. Il a ajouté qu'en ce qui le concerne, les MGF ne sont pas pratiquées

## Niger: l'Onu appelle à la protection des filles contre le mariage précoce



Les Nations unies ont rappelé, cette semaine, dans un communiqué publié mardi 4 avril, qu'au Niger, « les filles ont le droit d'être protégées contre le mariage précoce ». C'est la réaction de l'ONU après la mort d'une jeune fille de 16 ans.

Nazira a été retrouvée, début mars, pendue à un arbre, dans son village de Daré, dans la région de Zinder, dans le sud du pays. Le communiqué des Nations unies explique que « d'après des sources locales, Nazira se serait suicidée à la suite d'un mariage forcé. »

Au Niger, chaque année, 75 % des jeunes mariées sont mineures dont 28 % ont moins de 16 ans. Malgré une volonté politique d'améliorer la condition féminine, les mariages précoces perdurent et mènent à des actes désespérés.

« L'Unicef nous a rapporté, il y a quelques jours, cette fois une tentative de suicide à Maradi. Là, la jeune fille a pu en réchapper. Elle a tenté de s'empoisonner avec un liquide toxique et elle a pu être amenée à un centre de santé et elle a été sauvée. Elle a échappé au drame mais c'est un problème, ici, au Niger, et le gouvernement en est parfaitement conscient. Au niveau législatif, il y a encore une loi qui autorise le mariage des jeunes filles à partir de 15 ans. Le gouvernement travaille à la réforme de cette loi-là. Dans la

Constitution, il y a quand même des mesures où il est clairement indiqué que le mariage ne peut être fait que sur la base d'un consentement. Le gouvernement a indiqué clairement sa volonté à réduire ou à éliminer les discriminations basées sur le genre mais je pense que ce qui est le plus important - c'est tout le débat - c'est que c'est un problème de société. Ça doit commencer là, avec la société civile, avec les différentes communautés, avec les leaders religieux, les leaders traditionnels où il y a encore beaucoup de résistance par rapport aux changements », souligne Emmanuel Gignac, coordinateur résident par intérim du système des Nations unies.

## Burkina Faso : la double attaque près de Seytenga, des représailles après une tentative de vol

Une double attaque qui a fait 44 morts dans la nuit du 6 au 7 avril 2023 près de Seytenga, au Nord du Burkina Faso, est due à des représailles après une tentative de vol de bétail qui avait mal tourné dans le village de Kourakou.

Au Burkina Faso, les circonstances de l'attaque des villages de Kourakou et Tondobi sont désormais davantage connues. Dans la nuit du 6 au 7 avril 2023, ces deux localités de la commune de Seytenga, dans la région du Sahel, au Nord du pays, ont subi l'assaut de plusieurs hommes armés. Dans un communiqué publié le 8 avril, le gouverneur de la région du Sahel a donné un bilan de 44 victimes. Cette attaque est venue en représailles d'une tentative de vol qui a mal tourné. Des représailles Quarante-huit heures avant, deux hommes armés avaient tenté de voler du bétail dans le village de Kourakou. Mais ils s'étaient heurtés à la résistance des populations. Celles-ci ont répliqué, tuant l'un d'entre eux. Certains habitants ont décrit ces deux



hommes comme des combattants de l'État islamique dans le Grand Sahara (EIGS). Mais il est difficile de faire la part des choses dans cette partie du Burkina Faso où les intérêts de réseaux criminels rejoignent ceux des hommes armés. « Seytenga est encerclée » Pour l'heure, les populations jouissent d'un calme, qu'elles estiment relatif. Car, d'après des sources locales, les groupes armés sont installés à quelques kilomètres de Seytenga. Depuis plusieurs mois, les terroristes ont demandé aux populations de déguerpir et ont réquisitionné des villages entiers. « Seytenga est encerclée », confiait ce 10 avril à RFI un membre de la société civile, qui évoque un véritable harcèlement des hommes armés. Ils attaquent notamment sur la route, entre Dori à l'Ouest et Tera, de l'autre côté de la frontière au Niger.



opérations de la Sande Secret Society, y compris les MGF à l'époque.

Également le 28 septembre 2021, la fille de Parker, âgée de 15 ans, a été enlevée par des chefs traditionnels du Libéria, connus sous le nom de zoes, et emmenée de Mount Barclay, une ville près de la capitale Monrovia, à Sande Bush. Là, elle a été initiée de force à la société secrète des zoes. Pour ces femmes, l'initiation comprend les mutilations génitales féminines (MGF).

Le Conseil national traditionnel et le gouvernement du Libéria, ainsi que l'Ambassadrice de bonne volonté des Nations Unies pour l'abolition des MGF en Afrique, lors de sa visite au Libéria en 2022, ont organisé un événement

dans son comté.

Au Libéria, le surintendant est considéré comme le directeur administratif d'un comté et sa principale responsabilité est de superviser et de coordonner l'administration et la gestion quotidiennes du comté. Le surintendant est nommé par le président et sert de représentant du président dans le comté.

Ainsi est-il surprenant que le surintendant qui travaille également en étroite collaboration avec d'autres responsables du comté, dont le caucus législatif du comté, le surintendant chargé du développement et le conseil régional pour assurer une gouvernance et une prestation de services efficaces, dise qu'il n'est pas de sa responsabilité de veiller à ce que les chefs traditionnels des comtés se conforment à l'interdiction.



# LIBERIANS DEBATE

Topic: Murder

By Naneka A. Hoffman

Family members of the late Charloe Musu have officially requested the Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Justice, to turn over their daughter's body for burial. Over ten family members of the deceased, including guardian Justice Gloria Musu Scott, and the father of the late Charloe Musu, on Thursday, April 6, 2023, walked to the Ministry of Justice with a communication addressed to Justice Minister and Attorney General, Frank Musah Dean, noting that the conduct of a recent autopsy by the State was for the purpose of establishing, scientifically, the cause of death, following which Pathologist Dr. Benedict Kulee informed the family and the public that the autopsy report would have been released in two weeks, but time has elapsed hence, they want the body for interment.

The NEW DAWN randomly asked some Monrovia residents whether it is appropriate for government to turn over the deceased to the family amid an inconclusive autopsy. Read their responses below.



Brown Weah

"I think it will be unfair if the government turned the body over to the family members, because it is not necessary now until the autopsy report can come out because there is confusion over the body. People are saying that former Chief Justice Cllr. Gloria Musu Scott's daughter did this to her own sister, because Gloria's

daughter is at the hospital and the girl that was killed was one of her sister's daughters. So, people are saying that this thing came from the woman's angle, while others say it is the government. There is a confusion over the body. So, I think within my mind that government shouldn't turn the body over to the family until the autopsy report can come out."

"For me, I observe that the government is holding the body and waiting on the autopsy report. Because we all know she is a former Chief Justice, Cllr. Gloria M. Scott, who knows the law. According to her, there was foul play in her house. So, if there was foul play, there are so many deaths under this regime no perpetrator has been brought to justice; like the auditors that were found dead [in the car] on Broad Street. There are so



Hassan Bility

many deaths and the autopsy report is out to the Liberian people. Let the government waits for the final autopsy report."

"The government should turn the late Charloe Musu's body over to her family because from the ascendancy of this government, nothing comes out of their autopsy. All the autopsies they



Alexander Weah

have been conducting are mere show. The government is not trusted, so it should turn the body over to the



Benjamin Yeabee

"No. for me, I don't see reason in it because proper investigation is not yet heard; so, if proper investigation is not yet

heard and the government turns the body over to the family, we the citizens will not understand anything about what's going on. So, if the government hold fast to the body, they will be serious to carry on the investigation and then bring the facts. So, no; the government shouldn't turn the body over yet."

"I think at this junction, we all are eager to know what killed the girl (the late Chaelo). So, the government is doing all it can and many hands are pointing at the government that they are responsible. So, to go to the root cause of this death, the government must do all they can in their capacity. So, it is the autopsy report we all are



Daniel Kardeo

waiting for to know the cause of her death. If people are demanding for the body at this point, it raises serious eyebrow. I think the government needs to do all in their capacity not to give the body until the autopsy results can be out."



# Huge ammunition discovered in Ganta

By Thomas Domah/  
Nimba County

Over one thousand rounds of ammunition have been discovered in Blagay Town community, Ganta, Nimba County, causing unease among residents. The ammunition, totaling one thousand, ninety-three

the discovery when he had gone to clean the backyard of his parents' home. Arlington Gbosue could not believe his eyes and immediately alarmed, drawing residents' attention.

The area is adjacent the residence of a notorious Ivorian armed robber Abu Weamie, who is currently

arrested for being in possession of automatic weapons and ammunition.

Besides, Liberian Joint Security forces assigned at the Ganta-Guinea border have arrested several persons with single-barrel guns and rounds. Nimba County was the launching pad or birthplace of the 1989 rebel incursion in



Flashback: A pictorial of guns smuggled to Liberia

(1093) pieces, are believed to be AK-47 and GMG rounds along with seven empty shells. They were turned over to the Ganta Police detachment.

Police Commander Archie Dennis took delivery of the ammunition rounds and empty shells.

A 16-year-old lad made

detained at the Sanniquellie Center Prison in Sanniquellie City, Nimba.

The discovery has created panic among residents of Ganta City, as they call on government for timely investigation.

The commercial district has suffered several armed robberies with suspects

Liberia by jailed former Liberian president Charles Taylor, thru Butuo, a border town. Arms had also been discovered buried in other parts of the country, including Lofa County that was heavily contested by rival armed factions during the civil war.

Editing by Jonathan Browne

## Starts from page 7 County Superintendents

that when CDC took over in 2022, they inherited lot of challenges. "These challenges among them were the disunity among the people of Lofa, tribalism, selfishness, partiality, and tribal division amongst others." he said, "The first step that we took was to try and unite the people of Lofa and to settle their tribal division. Today, we have settled the land dispute in Lofa and we now have sign boards that say welcome to Lofa."

He also revealed that the president has helped the county flourish with healthcare, education infrastructure, and agriculture amounts others. Lofa County is located in northern Liberia and is one of the largest and most populous counties in the country, with a population of over 270,000 people. The government of Liberia, with support from international organizations, has also made significant efforts to improve human capacity building in Lofa County, particularly in the areas of education, healthcare, and agriculture.

In recent years, the government has launched several initiatives to improve education in Lofa County, including the construction of new schools, the recruitment and training of teachers, and the provision of learning materials.

Lofa County is also home to the Lofa County Community College, which provides vocational and academic training to students from the

county and surrounding areas.

In the healthcare sector, the government and international organizations have worked to improve access to healthcare services, particularly in rural areas. This has involved the construction of new health clinics, the deployment of medical personnel, and the training of community health workers. Lofa County is also an important agricultural region, and efforts have been made to support smallholder farmers and promote sustainable agriculture practices. This has included the provision of agricultural inputs and equipment, training in modern farming techniques, and the development of value chains for key crops.

Institutions such as UNICEF, USAID, and the World Bank have played significant roles in supporting human capacity building in Lofa County, providing funding and technical assistance for education, healthcare, and agricultural initiatives.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain, including limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of skilled professionals in key sectors. However, the ongoing commitment of the government and its partners to human capacity building in Lofa County offers hope for the future of the region. Furthermore, government in collaboration with international organizations, has made significant efforts to improve human capacity building in Margibi County, particularly in the areas of education, healthcare, and agriculture.

## Starts from page 6 CEMESP train journalists on

conflicts during time of elections" He said "the role of the journalist is to report the facts, nothing else but the facts being fully aware of the consequences of what lies ahead of what you report".

Mr. Sainworla then urged the journalists to be considerate and professional and treat women candidates with high level of "sensitivity and care". The training covered topics on understanding the rules and procedures of election, the National Elections Commission migration to biometric voter registration, election reporting code of ethics and gender balance in election reporting.

Research base journalism and storytelling, rise of new media, effective use of peace music in radio production, conflict sensitive reporting and basic skills for interviewing politicians also formed part of the training.

CEMESP Program Associate-Wremongar Joe who coordinated the training remarked that "as Liberia moves towards the impactful realization of peace in the country, Journalists need to acquire adequate knowledge of conflict theories, as well as additional reporting skills and the analytical "know how" to be able to report accurately, impartially, safely and be gender

sensitive within conflict situations".

"The need for the attainment of peace in Liberia is not overemphasized and this must be reflected in the quality of journalism that will be supplied during the 2023 election and even after"

He added, the presence of a sustainable peace process is integral to achieve national economic development and therefore urged journalists to use their platforms to promote peace, dialogue, and reconciliation."

Mr. Joe told the gathering how grateful CEMESP is to OSIWA for the support for the to the implementation of the conflict sensitive training which "is most needed in the face of the wave of violence that has marred the national voter registration process".

Recently, the Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) of which CEMEPS is a member released a statement in Monrovia condemning "the wave of violence" occasioning the voter registration process and asked the National Elections Commission to apply the law.

CEMESP said it hopes the training will better prepare community radio reporters and editors to better handle news gathering and reporting for this year's presidential and general elections.

## Starts from back page Alleged drug traffickers to testify in US\$100

Counsels so prayed and respectfully submit," the defense pleaded.

The defense averred that the continuance is intended to enable them to review the prosecution evidence in consultation with the defendants to enable them to outline their strategy for proceeding with their defense.

"We say, the defense was not aware or expecting that the prosecution would rest their side of the case at this time and the witness for the defense are not ready. Therefore, the defense Team needs time to examine and review the evidence submitted by the prosecution and discuss same with the defendant especially as to the content of the cell phone and the video clips or CCTV that were produced by the prosecution. The laws will need comments from the defendants on the contents of the telephone and the video CCTV recording" they noted.

Meanwhile, the court noted the defendants' Counsels application and asked the prosecution to respond.

However, in their response to the application prayed for by the defense, prosecution rejected the application and asked the court to trash the request.

Prosecution argued that the defense application for continuance is in total bad fate because it is a tactic implored by the defense team to bring about unnecessary delays in the trial.

The prosecution argued that the defense team participated in the trial and traveled along with the prosecution while it submitted its evidence to the court and the jury and the minute of the court have been available to the defense lawyers on a sitting-by-sitting basis on the trial.

Therefore, the prosecution team noted that the application is improvident for the defense claim that it is unprepared to continue with the trial at this time.

Prosecution further indicated that the ground provided for in the status for continuance has not been met by the defense team.

Prosecution lawyers say the defense refused to provide any ground as stated in section 1.6

of sub-paragraph four (4) of the Criminals Procedure Law wherein the basis for continuance is spelled out. The prosecution maintained that from the defense submission, it can be seen as woeful neglect of their responsibility as defense counsels, adding that their application is only intended to delay the trial.

"Therefore, the submission being without legal foundation but mere show of unpreparedness by them and to delay this trial should be sent and they should be ordered by 'Your Honor' to proceed to outline the theory of their case in today's sitting and proceed therefrom.

Wherefore, and in view of the foregoing, prosecution prayed the court to deny, disallow and dismissed the request for continuance as prayed for by the defense and grant unto prosecution every and all further reliefs which your honor finds just, legal, and equitable" the prosecution prayed.

However, after listening to both sides of the argument, the presiding judge granted the defense application for continuance.



## Alleged drug traffickers to testify in US\$100 million cocaine bust case

By Lincoln G. Peters

The four alleged drug traffickers in the US\$100 Million ongoing drug bust trial are expected to take the witness stand on Wednesday, April 12. The suspects are expected to testify to the crimes of

indicted by the Grand Jury of Montserrado County on charges including money laundering, as well as unlicensed possession and importation of controlled drugs, and criminal conspiracy.

Defendants Malam Conte, Adulai Djibri Djalo, Makki Admeh Issam and Oliver A.

controlled drugs or substances is also a felony of the first degree and criminal conspiracy, a felony of the second degree.

The indictment also noted that the act of the defendants is contrary to Section 15.2 of the Money Laundering Act, 2.2(b) of the Penal Law of Liberia, and against the peace and dignity of Liberia.

Also, the indictment states that the acts allegedly committed by the defendants are contrary to Section 14.102 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act 2014 and 2.2(b) of the Penal Law of Liberia as well as against the peace and dignity of Liberia.

At the trial on Monday, April 10, Counsel for the defendants prayed the court for continuance until Wednesday, April 12, to enable him to prepare a proper defense.

"Therefore, Counsels for defendants respectfully pray your honor to grant defense continuance until Wednesday, April 12, 2023, in order to prepare themselves to put up a proper defense for the defendants. Counsels say this request is made in good fate and in the interest of justice and fairness for defendants.

Zayzay, and others to be identified were indicted on the four counts by the Grand Jury.

According to the indictment, Conte, Djalo, Issam, Zayzay, and others to be identified conspired, colluded, and facilitated to commit the crime of Money Laundering, which is a felony of the first-degree, and the unlicensed importation of controlled drug or substance.

The possession of unlicensed



Flashback: Liberian authorities gathered to burn illegal drugs

drugs trafficking, and money laundering among others at the Criminal Court "C".

The trial grows out of the Saturday, October 1, 2022, US\$100 million worth of cocaine busted at a TRH rented facility on the Japanese Freeway in Topoe Village by joint Liberian security operation.

The four defendants and others to be identified were

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