

Full text of the leaked petition

PETITION TO SAVE THE STATE 2019

MONROVIA, LIBERIA

June 7, 2019

_Whereas the 1986 Constitution guarantees to citizens of the Republic of Liberia the right to freely, peacefully and lawfully assemble to petition their Government and elected Representatives to take action or avert any negative action as appertains to the welfare of the Liberian State and People;

Whereas since January 22, 2018 the Government of the Republic of Liberia, acting through its three (3) Branches (the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary), has been flagrant, defiant and belligerent in its conduct to the total displeasure of the People of Liberia for whose happiness and satisfaction “all government is established”;

Whereas in his 2019 State of the Nation Address, President George Manneh Weah exasperated Liberians when he woefully declared Liberia to be “far better than when he assumed office on January 22, 2018” in spite of the harsh economic conditions being caused, promoted and encouraged by bad governance, deliberate and wanton collapse of integrity systems and violation of the Constitution and Laws of the Republic of Liberia;

Whereas We, the Citizens of Liberia acting under the Banner of the Council of Patriots (COP), are convinced that the deteriorating economic conditions will continue to worsen mainly because of the intransigence and arrogance of President George Weah and senior officials of his administration ;

And whereas the Council of Patriots (COP) is a broad mosaic of the Liberian citizenry comprising of Patriotic Citizens, Civil Society Groupings, Pressure and Interest Groups, Youth and Student Organizations, marketers, transport operators including motorcyclists, taxi drivers, teachers and education workers, health workers, farmers and Political Parties concerned about the worsening governance situation in Liberia and the attending hardships imposed on the citizens by the said situation;

Concerned about the rapid decline of Liberia’s image, diminishing global and geopolitical standing as well as its deteriorating business and investment climate;

Determined to help avert the worsening governance situation from further deteriorating thereby undermining Liberia’s fragile peace and democracy after painful sacrifices by Liberians, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), the United Nations, the United States of America, and the European Union, respectively;

Encouraged by growing consensus among Liberians at home and abroad about the need for urgent, peaceful and concerted citizens' mass actions to save the Liberian State from total breakdown as the governance environment continues to worsen;

Aware also that since the inception of the CDC-led administration the leaderships of the three (3) Branches of Government have ignored calls, cries and concerns from citizens on all matters of State, and have instead chosen to prioritize their individual and personal interests and/or aspirations above the national interest, as evidenced by but not limited to the following:

- 1. Consummation of the so-called Eton Finance and Ebomaf loan deals despite outright rejection by Liberians and concerns from multilateral and bilateral Partners;**
- 2. Continuous flagrant violation of the Liberian constitution and laws including the recent unconstitutional removal of Associate Justice Kabina Jan'eh against public outcries and disapproval;**
- 3. Deliberate violations of the procurement laws of Liberia such as the granting of contractual rights, for handling services at the Roberts International Airport, awarding of Container Tracking Number (CTN) contract to GTMS without consideration for the PPCC Act , in clear violation of the Budget and PFM Law and the attending security implications;**
- 4. Witch hunting of critics and members of the Opposition through wrongful dismissals even from the civil service and denial of opportunities in the private sector;**
- 5. Suppression of press freedom and freedom of speech through threats against BBC's Jonathan Paylayleh, continual molestation and harassment of Roots FM, denial of operational license to Punch FM as well as conversion of the Liberia Broadcasting System-owned and operated ELBC into a Government's propaganda organ;**
- 6. Issuance of threats against critics by officials and the continuous remobilization of former combatants of the civil war;**
- 7. Construction and acquisition of scores of luxury private buildings by the President in the wake of his refusal to declare his assets within six months after assuming office and to make public assets reportedly declared to the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) following mounting pressures;**
- 8. Appointment and commissioning of George S.S. Pattern as Liberia's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in violation of the Liberian Constitution and the Senate's unconstitutional "validation" of the President's unconstitutional conduct of appointing and commissioning before confirmation by the Liberian Senate;**
- 9. Wanton misuse and abuse of public resources and powers by the President, Speaker, Pro- Tempore and senior officials;**
- 10. Meting out Selective justice as seen recently in the indictment of one former Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) Governor and a Deputy Executive Governor for their roles in the missing billions of Liberian banknotes printed and circulated in violation of the Liberian constitution, CBL Act, PFM and Procurement Laws, procedures and best practices;**

11. Failure to comprehensively address the issue of Liberia's missing 16 Billion Dollars to date and the 25 million dollars yet unaccounted for and lack of effective action taken against individuals responsible and the betray of public trust;
12. According Presidential protection and privilege by announcing a "retirement" plan for Governor Nathaniel Patray and ignoring any responsibility of the TEMT headed by the Minister of Finance, Samuel Tweah, the unlawful injection of billions of over-printed Liberian banknotes without removing legacy banknotes, and also for the unlawful act carried out in the use of some US\$25m withdrawn from Liberia's foreign reserve for a dubious mop-up exercise;
13. Continuous expenditures outside of the fiscal budget;
14. Use of more than US\$3m from the Ebola Emergency Fund from the Consolidated Accounts for which reason the Donor Community comprising the US, UK, Japan, Germany, Sweden, Norway, EU/EC and UN have protested and demanded restitution from the Government of Liberia;
15. Arbitrary use of international donors' funds without proper accountability
16. Failure and lack of capacity to address the rising inflation and exchange rate thus imposing unbearable hardship on the Liberian People
17. Flagrant disregard for international law and national reconciliation and disinterest in addressing war and economic crimes as documented in the TRC Report, disregard for the rule of law and good governance;
18. Government's apparent "don't-care" attitude about marketers, farmers and the vast majority of Liberians who are struggling to make ends meet because of growing hardships imposed on the country by bad governance, etc.; and
19. Lack of support to schools, community colleges, universities, hospitals, health centers and clinics, etc.

Now therefore We, the Citizens of the Republic of Liberia, acting in one accord under the Banner of the Council of Patriots (COP) comprising Patriotic Citizens, Civil Society Groupings, Pressure and Interest Groups, Youth and Student Organizations, marketers, transport operators including motorcyclists, taxi drivers, etc.; teachers and education workers, health workers, farmers and Political Parties;

Do hereby demand from our National Leaders serving through the Executive, Legislative and Judicial Branches of our Government as follows:

Governance, Human Rights and Rule of Law

- Electoral Reforms: Urgently proceed with efforts to amend and/or repeal the current Electoral Law
- Inclusive Governance: Establish an inclusive governance framework that reflects the diversity and interests of the Liberian Society;
- Immediately commission an independent investigation into the hasty impeachment of Associate Justice Kabina Jan'eh, which has undermined the integrity and independence of the Judiciary at a time when Liberians are craving for justice;
- Launch an immediate investigation into the mysterious death of Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) Assistant Director Matthew J. Innis which occurred at the same time

reports from two forensic audits into the missing billions of newly printed Liberian banknotes were released;

- Establish a Court to address Claims, Corruption and Rape
- Demonstrate respect for human rights, human dignity and Press Freedom through the comprehensive review of our constitution and the laws that restrain the exercise of basic freedoms especially the media;

National Peace & Reconciliation:

Immediately demobilize all former Fighters re-deployed into various entities thus reigniting the fear, creating a threat to peace and undercutting the restructuring of our national security sector;

Immediately implement the Recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), particularly the recommendation for establishment of a war and an economic crimes court in Liberia without delay (The Government of Liberia should make a request to the United Nations for such a court before July 26, 2019);

- **Immediately take steps to curb, through public denunciation, reprimand and/or condemnation all anti-peace, fanatical, sectionalistic, tribalistic and divisive utterances by officials, friends, associates, political actors (whether of the CDC or otherwise) which seek to promote division and disunity in violation of the Liberian constitution;**
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Integrity & Accountability:

Immediately implement the comprehensive audit of all government ministries, agencies and parastatals of the period of this Administration and proceed to legally without discrimination to address past audits;

Immediately declare all assets of the President and relevant officials and implement the verification process

Immediately implement and ensure the prosecution of any and all persons found culpable and connected to the US\$25-m mop-up exercise and missing billions of Liberian dollars as contained in the Kroll's and Presidential Investigation Team's (PIT's) reports which show gross improprieties by the Technical Economic Management Team;

- **Immediately discontinue and/or halt any plan and/or intention to pay any financial benefits or rewards to Governor Nathaniel Patray**

Immediately impose a moratorium on and conduct a comprehensive audit of all expenditures on Liberia's Foreign Reserve Account and the National Budget;

Conduct a comprehensive Audit of all and any of the dozens of personal infrastructure and/or building projects undertaken by President Weah at several locations in Montserrado County since he assumed office including the purchase of private jet and yacht; (This is a constitutional requirement);

- **Immediately give account of how more than US\$3m of the Ebola Emergency Fund contributed by donors and placed in Government's Consolidated Accounts was withdrawn and expended, for which reason many of Liberia's major international Partners have protested and demanded restitution;**
- **Immediately suspend all negotiations for loans and any new concessions until at such time when integrity institutions and systems are restored to operate without interference and within the limits of the law;**
- **Immediately launch an audit of all infrastructural and ongoing road projects ;**
- **Immediately give account of all Social Development Funds (SDFs) paid by various concessionaires for the benefit of the counties in which they operate;**
- **Immediately halt the unlawful awarding of contracts to businesses with close ties to the President and senior members of his administration;**
- **Reconstitute through independent vetting all integrity institutions to ensure independence;**

Corruption

- **For the purpose of transparency, the president and his officials should immediately make public "assets" they are reported to have "declared" to the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) and ensure that they are verified;**
- **Immediately establish a special court to try all corruption cases in Liberia so that indictments cannot linger indefinitely and so that justice can truly be served to those accused;**
- **Beginning effective fiscal 2019/2020 reallocate to health institutions all appropriations for medical check-ups and benefits for public officials serving in the three(3) branches to improving the country's health system (Less attention is paid to Liberia's health sector because most officials can travel abroad not for cases referred by hospitals but also for as simple a process as seeking a medical check-up, which is why priority consideration is not given to the country's health sector);**
- **Legally expel all individuals previously convicted for crimes in their countries who are now operating in Liberia**
- **On the US\$25m funds withdrawn from Liberia's reserve for the so-called mop-up exercise of 2018, immediately take action(s) to bring to justice all those that were involved, including but not limited to current officials;**
- **Immediately provide explanation as to which individuals within the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) or the Government of Liberia received or approved the injection of the new Liberian banknotes into the economy without effectively removing from circulation the equivalent quantity and/or value of legacy banknotes(This is a**

recommendation and/or request from Kroll's Associates); and address the role of the TEMT Chaired by the Minister of Finance, Samuel Tweah, as well as its culpability;

- Immediately stop funding activities of the First Lady which are not covered by Law;
- Immediately place a moratorium on insignificant foreign travels to ensure that resources are used to benefit all Liberians and Beginning effective June 2019 and as part of austerity measures reduce the size of presidential delegations substantially and stop the use of a private jet for travels;
- Immediately allow the General Auditing Commission (GAC) to audit the Legislature as required by law.

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Economy

Develop, design and implement an economic reform plan to revive our declining economy and address financial and fiscal reforms;

- Take urgent steps to improve the business environment in Liberia by aggressively urgently removing all administrative bottlenecks and barriers that hinder trade, including the duplication of functions, removal of irrelevant personnel from the Customs Office at the Freeport of Monrovia and major ports of entry;
- Comply fully with the Budget and Public Financial Management (PFM) Laws by stopping the habit of off-budget spending;
- Restore integrity to our Forestry sector by taking urgent steps to maintain the current monitoring system as the contract with SGS will soon end;
- Immediately desist from withdrawing funds from Liberia's foreign reserve, which should only happen in the event when revenue-generating activities collapse and when the nation's economic survival is directly threatened (This was never the case when some US\$25m was withdrawn for an ambiguous mop-up exercise);
- Henceforth make public and as required by law all Expressions of Interest (EOIs) submitted by would-be investors for proper scrutiny to avoid potential risks and to make difficult, if not impossible, infiltration of Liberia by businesses linked to terror or criminal groups;
- Immediately cease any and all actions, intentions, desire and attempts to reduce civil servants' salaries at any time in the short-, medium- and long terms;

Note: Austerity measures to be instituted by the Government of Liberia must affect the salaries, incentives, benefits of senior officials of Government and appropriations to private entities owned and operated by members of the Executive and Legislative Branches, respectively;

- Immediately present a clear fiscal and monetary strategy intended to resuscitate the Liberian economy, which has been on a downward spiral from the inception of the CDC-led administration because of declining investor confidence, rising corruption, and bad governance;

- **Immediately give a full status report of Liberia’s foreign reserve and henceforth stop its unlawful use and state why the national reserve is being depleted despite there being no national emergency on hand;**
- **Immediately grant tax holidays to major investors and importers of essential commodities because no economy can tax its way out of inflation (This will be a powerful panacea for job losses and keep thousands of Liberians employed);**
- **Immediately cancel the Container Tracking Number (CTN) contract awarded to GTMS without tender and choose between the current Pre-Shipment Inspection (PSI) regime and Container Tracking Number (CTN) system because no country in the world operates two (2) systems at the same time (Liberia must choose one and not use both at the same time);**

Immediately place a moratorium on hiring to include State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) until at such a time when a comprehensive report on the status of these SOEs has been prepared, submitted and considered by the Legislature without prejudice to their continuous viability;

Immediately remove all additional procedures and cost-adding steps and simplify all import and export procedures to include the immediate removal of between thirteen (13) to twenty (20) new steps for a single shipment (This is having a huge toil on consumers thereby contradicting the “Pro-Poor Agenda” by forcing businesses to arbitrarily increase prices);

Note: Because real-time container tracking is a free service offered by all shipping lines, it makes no financial, economic or trade sense to charge any fee for tracking containers destined for Liberia which are already processed through the Pre-Shipment Inspection (PSI) system (This leads to additional increase in cost to importers and exporters, and it further helps to devalue Liberia’s main export commodities (rubber, cocoa, palm oil, iron ore, etc.);

- **Immediately remove the precondition of obtaining Container Tracking Numbers (CTNs) before loading any containers destined for Liberia; and**
- **While the Pre-Shipment Inspection (PSI) system is still in use, the Government of Liberia should move urgently on the full implementation of the Single Window system, which donors and Liberia’s partners will be excited to support in rolling out in a timely manner.**

Education, Health & Agriculture

- **Develop and implement a comprehensive program to properly fund the Education, Health, Agriculture Sectors as a matter of priority;**
- **Immediately remove duties on all agricultural inputs and implements in order to support local food and cash crop production.**
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Immediately review the continual selective appropriations to privately-owned and operated educational and health institutions without regard for long-standing institutions that have been rendering invaluable services in these sectors for decades.

Petition made on this 7th Day of June A. D. 2019 in the City of Monrovia, Republic of Liberia by the Council of Patriots (COP), a conglomeration of Patriotic Citizens, Civil Society Groupings, Pressure and Interest Groups, Youth, Workers and Student Organizations, and major Political Parties

THE PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN!