



# **LIBERIA COUNTRY REPORT**

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**Country Information & Policy Unit**

**IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY DIRECTORATE  
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# **1. Scope of Document**

**1.1** This Country Report has been produced by the Country Information and Policy Unit, Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office, for use by Home Office officials involved in the asylum / human rights determination process. The Report provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum / human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. It is not a detailed or comprehensive survey.

**1.2** The Report is compiled from a wide range of recognised sources and does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy. All information in the Report is attributed, throughout the text, to original source material, which has been made available to those working in the asylum / human rights determination process. The Report aims to provide only a brief summary of the source material quoted. For a more detailed account, the relevant source documents should be examined directly.

**1.3** The information contained in this Country Report is, by its nature, limited to information that we have been able to identify from various well-recognised sources. The contents of this Report are not exhaustive and the absence of information under any particular heading does not imply that any analysis or judgement has been exercised to exclude that information, but simply that relevant information on the subject has not been identified from the sources that have been consulted. Equally, the information included in the Reports should not be taken to imply anything beyond what is actually stated.

**1.4** The great majority of the source material is readily available in the public domain. Copies of other source documents, such as those provided by government offices, may be provided upon request.

**1.5** All sources have been checked for currency, and as far as can be ascertained, contain information which remained relevant at the time this Report was issued. Some source documents have been included because they contain relevant information not available in more recent documents.

**1.6** This Country Report and the accompanying source material are publicly disclosable. Where sources identified in this Report are available in electronic form the relevant link has been included. The date that the relevant link was accessed in preparing the report is also included. Paper copies of the source documents have been distributed to nominated officers within IND.

**1.7** It is intended to revise this Report on a six-monthly basis while the country remains within the top 35 asylum producing countries in the United Kingdom. Information contained in Country Reports is inevitably overtaken by events that occur between the 6 monthly publications. Caseworkers are informed of such changes in country conditions by means of Country Information Bulletins.

## 2. Geography

**2.1** The Republic of Liberia is a coastal West African state of approximately 97,754 sq kms, bordered by Sierra Leone to the west, the Republic of Guinea to the north and Côte d'Ivoire to the east. The CIA World Factbook noted that as of December 2003, Liberia was divided into "15 counties; Bomi, Bong, Gparbolu, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Lofa, Margibi, Maryland, Montserrado, Nimba, River Cess, River Gee, Sinoe". [1a](p.601)[6](p.4) The capital city is Monrovia. Liberia experiences a distinct rainy season, between May and October, with a short break in the southern coastal region, and is generally hot and humid throughout the year. The country consists of a wide coastal plain, with several low-lying hill ranges inland, and is densely forested in most parts. Liberia population is estimated at approximately 3 million. The population is divided into 16 main indigenous tribal groups, plus groups of non-tribal Liberians and non-Liberian Africans. [1a](p.601)[2a](p.1&16) For further information on geography, refer to Europa Yearbook source [1a][1b].

## 3. Economy

**3.1** Liberia is a very poor country with a market-based economy that has not developed due to many years of civil conflict and unrest. Few statistics are available, but it is unlikely that there has been any real growth during 2003. [2a](p.1)

**3.2.** An estimated 80% of the population lives on less than \$1 per day, and there is high unemployment. The absence of infrastructure throughout the country continued to depress the economy, despite being rich in natural resources and with the potential to be self-sufficient in food. Those in power have exploited the country's natural resources for personal gain. Extortion and corruption is widespread in all levels of society. [1a](p.611-612)[2a](p.1)

## 4. History

**4.1** In 1847, Liberia was established as an independent state by freed slaves from America. After gaining its independence, descendants of the original settlers, known as the Americo-Liberians, dominated Liberian politics until 1980. In that year, Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe, a member of the Krahn ethnic group, seized power in a military coup. Widespread human rights abuses followed, creating internal instability and international condemnation. On Christmas Eve 1989, the National Patriotic Forces of Liberia (NPFL), which was led by Charles Taylor, began a revolt which quickly became an ethnically-based civil war between the Krahn and Mandingo dominated Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), and the Gio and Mano who supported the NPFL. The conflict led to the collapse of the Doe dictatorship and his execution in 1990 by an offshoot of the NPFL. [3](p.1-2)

**4.2** Liberia was in a state of civil war from 1989 to 1997. This war only ended when President Charles Taylor took power, after elections on 19 July 1997. However, President Taylor's legitimacy was contested by rebel groups, and his control did not extend to the whole of the country; particularly the border region in the north.

[1b](p.2580-2585)[3](p.2) President Taylor stood down from office in August 2003, and has since left Liberia. A transitional administration was set up under the chairmanship of Gyude Bryant in October 2003. [2a](p.1) For further information on history, refer to Europa Yearbook source [1a][1b].

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## **5. State Structures**

### **The Constitution**

**5.1** The 1984 Liberian Constitution provides for certain fundamental human rights, and is supported by a theoretically independent judiciary. However, the unrest and violence that has dominated recent Liberian history, has resulted in its provisions not being respected. Tribal affiliations and loyalties, together with corruption and general inefficiency, also played significant roles in the country, and have all been major factors affecting the impartiality of the police, judiciary and other Government bodies. [1b](p.2591)[2a](p.1-19)

### **Citizenship**

**5.2** The requirements for citizenship are set out in chapter IV of the Liberian Constitution. Citizenship would appear to be acquired by descent from a Liberian citizen. Dual nationals must, upon reaching maturity, renounce any other citizenship that they may hold by descent from a foreign national. One of the requirements for citizenship, is that a person is of "Negroes or of Negro descent", which effectively bars non-African minorities from becoming Liberian citizens. There is limited information regarding the acquisition of citizenship, but naturalisation is referred to in the Constitution. [2a](p.16)[17b](p.1-2)

### **Political System**

**5.3** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that "The Constitution provides for the right to vote in free and fair elections, and citizens exercised this right in 1997 in elections that international observers deemed administratively free and transparent; however, the elections were conducted in an atmosphere of intimidation, because most voters believed that military forces loyal to Taylor would have resumed the civil war if he lost. Since his election in 1997, President Taylor used intimidation, patronage, and corruption to maintain power. Because the legislative elections were held on the basis of proportional representation, Taylor's NPP [National Patriotic Party] won control of the legislature by the same 75 percent majority that he received in the popular vote for the presidency." In light of conditions within Liberia, elections scheduled for October 2003 were postponed, and it is intended that the next elections will be held in October 2005. [2a](p.13)[14b]

**5.4** On 11 August 2003, President Taylor stood down from Office. He left Liberia on the same day to take up residence in Nigeria. His Vice President Moses Zeh Blah replaced

him as interim President, pending the formation of a transitional government. [5b](p.1-3)

**5.5** On 14 October 2003, Gyude Bryant, a former Liberian businessman, was inaugurated as Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), with Wesley Johnson as vice-chairman. The NTGL has 21 ministries, with 5 each going to representatives from the previous Liberian Government, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL); both these groups were opposed to President Taylor's rule. The remaining seats were allocated to other political parties. The NTGL will remain in power until October 2005, when it is intended that full elections will be held.

[2a](p.1)[3](p2-4)[12a]

**5.6** The NTGL has an assembly, the National Transitional Legislative Assembly (NTLA), which is to be made up of 76 members, comprising members of groups opposed to former President Taylor, and supporters of the previous regime. The previous Liberian Government, LURD and MODEL each have 12 representatives. The body also includes 18 representatives of political parties, and 7 representatives from civil society and special interest groups. There will also be representatives from each of Liberia's 15 counties, but these did not attend the initial meeting. The Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) chief mediator General Abubakar rejected nominees from the counties after representatives from LURD and MODEL objected, as the county elections had not been conducted within the counties themselves. The method by which these elections will be conducted remains unresolved in 9 of the counties.

[2c](p.4)[12a](p.2)[14b](p.14)

**5.7** In January 2004, some senior members of LURD and MODEL called for Chairman Bryant's resignation, but this demand was later retracted. Internal problems within LURD have also had an effect on the first few months of Chairman Bryant's administration. In January 2004, there was threat of a split in the ranks of LURD. The reason for this was a leadership struggle within LURD, with some of its members supporting its present chairman Sekou Damate Conneh and others his estranged wife Aisha Keita Conneh.

[5k][12b]

## Judiciary

**5.8** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated the following: "Although the Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, judges were subjected to political, social, familial, and financial pressures, and the judiciary was corrupt. Some judges and magistrates were not lawyers. The judiciary has determined that it was not feasible to retire all judicial personnel who were not legally trained. By statute, members of the bar must be graduates of a law school and pass the bar examination. During President Taylor's administration, the executive branch continued to exert strong influence on the judiciary. For example, the Government's assertion that persons identified as "illegal combatants" have no recourse to civil courts appeared to have no basis in law. There were no reports that the NTGL exerted influence on the judiciary." [2a](p.6) However, the report added that "Courts regularly received bribes or other illegal gifts out of damages that they awarded in civil cases. Defense attorneys often suggested that their clients pay a gratuity to appease judges, prosecutors, and police officers to secure favorable rulings."

[2a](p.6)

**5.9** According to the United States State Department Report for 2003, “The judiciary is divided into four levels, with the Supreme Court at the apex. All levels of the court system in Monrovia, including the Supreme Court, functioned sporadically. The Government was unable to revitalize the court system outside of Monrovia due to the war and a lack of trained personnel, a lack of infrastructure, and inadequate funding. Although judges were assigned throughout the country, in some cases they were unable to hold court due to the war, lack of supplies, and lack of equipment.” [1b](p.2591)[2a](p.6)

**5.10** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that “Clan chieftains continued to use the traditional practice of trial-by-ordeal to resolve criminal cases in rural areas. The Supreme Court ruled that trial-by-ordeal--commonly the placement of a heated metal object on a suspect's body in an attempt to determine whether the defendant is telling the truth--is unconstitutional; however, the practice continued under an executive order.” [2a](p.4)

**5.11** Defendants have a right to a fair trial, which conforms to internationally accepted standards, but in practice this is not always observed. Defendants have the right to a public trial and access to legal advice. However, there is no effective system for the provision of legal representation, cover is especially poor in some rural areas. Some NGO's (Non –Governmental Organisations) provide legal services to the poor and to those without access to free representation. [2a](p.6-7)

## **Legal Rights/Detention**

**5.12** According to the United States State Department Country Report for 2003, “The Constitution provides for the rights of the accused, including warrants for arrests and the right of detainees either to be charged or released within 48 hours. Warrants were not always based on sufficient evidence, and detainees, particularly those without the means to hire a lawyer, often were held for more than 48 hours without charge. The police only have limited logistics and forensic capabilities and cannot adequately investigate many crimes, including murder cases. When the courts released known criminals for lack of evidence, police officers often arrested them again on false charges.” [2a](p.5)

**5.13** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that “The Constitution provides for the right of a person who is charged to receive an expeditious trial; however, lengthy pretrial and pre-arraignment detention remained serious problems. In some cases, the length of the pretrial detention equalled or exceeded the length of sentence for the crime.” [2a](p6) The report also noted that “There were fewer reports of arbitrary arrest and detention after the NTGL came into power.” [2a](p5)

## **Death Penalty**

**5.14** Liberia retains the death penalty, but there have been no reports of it being used in recent years. [15a](p.1)

## Internal Security

**5.15** LURD is the main rebel group, which was opposed to the Taylor regime. LURD is reported to be backed by Guinea, and has received arms and supplies from there. The organisation is reported to have recruited fighters from Guinea, Sierra Leone and other West African countries. LURD is mostly based in the north of the country, particularly around Lofa County, and the northern Mandingo tribe is reported to be supporting it. [7a](p.1)

**5.16** Another group, which was opposed to Taylor's rule, is MODEL, this is a southern-based organisation, backed by the Ivory Coast, and the Krahn tribe. These groups are loosely organised, and so it is possible that members of other tribal groups could also be supporters. LURD and MODEL are co-operating with each other, and have taken part in the peace talks in Accra. [7a](p.1-2)[14a](p.1)

**5.17** In early 2003, LURD launched an offensive against Liberian Government forces. MODEL appears to have been able to co-ordinate its activities with those of LURD, which prevented President Taylor's forces from responding effectively. Rebel forces were able to attack Monrovia on a number of occasions in June and July 2003. Rebel forces, mostly from LURD, were able to capture areas of Monrovia itself, including the port area. These groups have now withdrawn to positions outside the city. Hundreds of civilians were wounded or killed as a result of this violence. [1a](p.610-611)[7b](p.1)

**5.18** A cease-fire was agreed on 17 June 2003, at a meeting between the Liberian Government, LURD and MODEL held in Accra, Ghana, but it was not respected. There was continued violence throughout late June and July 2003, as rebel groups and Government supporters fought for control of areas of Monrovia. [1a](p.610-611)[7b](p.1) A peace agreement was signed in Ghana on 18 August 2003. This provides for an interim Government, which will take power, for a two-year period, from mid October 2003, and after that period there will then be elections. [5e](p.1-2)[7b](p.1)

**5.19** On 4 August 2003, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sent a peacekeeping force to Liberia, the ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL). In October 2003, a UN mission, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), was deployed. The ECOMIL units already in Liberia were attached to this mission in October 2003. [2a](p.1)[18e](p.1)

**5.20** President Taylor stood down from Office on 11 August 2003. He left Liberia on the same day to take up residence in Nigeria. However, he is facing an indictment by the Special Court in Sierra Leone for crimes against humanity. This is because of his support for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), during the civil war in that country. Vice President Moses Zeh Blah replaced him as interim President. [5b](p.1-3)[15b](p.1) In October 2003, a transitional administration was set up under the Chairman Gyude Bryant, and this is intended to hold power until elections are held in October 2005. [3](p.2)

**5.21** There has been a reduction in violence in areas where peacekeepers have been



deployed, particularly around Monrovia, but the situation remains tense. [5d](p.1-2)[5i](p.1-3) The port city of Buchanan remains under the control of MODEL, but peacekeepers were deployed in the area in December 2003. UNMIL is continuing to deploy within the country, and all groups appear to be generally co-operating with this deployment. [5m](p.1-5).

**5.22.** In December 2003, there was an outbreak of rioting in Monrovia by members of rebel groups, who wanted the disarmament process, which was part of the August 2003 agreement, to start at the earliest possible date. A number of people were killed, but order was soon restored. This violence appears to be a result of frustration by those who were waiting to be disarmed, and was not supported by any group within the country. [5j][14b][16a] In December 2003, the process of disarmament was suspended, and is due to resume in early 2004, when there will be adequate preparation to undertake this programme. [12b][18f](p.5-7)

**5.23** The situation has improved in areas where peacekeepers have been deployed, but given the recent violence, and the large numbers of unemployed and impoverished former combatants, even in these areas there are still security concerns. Human rights abuses are still being reported in the interior of the country, which is mostly rural with limited communications. These crimes have included looting, assaults on civilians, forced labour and rape. These crimes would appear to be random acts of violence, and do not appear to have been sanctioned by the leadership of any group within the country. While these may be mostly acts of indiscipline, they may also indicate the limited control that the leadership of these various groups has over their supporters. [5m](p. 1-5)[12b][18f](p.9-13)

## **Border security and relations with neighbouring countries**

**5.24** The Mano River Union (MRU) was formed in 1973 to establish a customs and economic union between Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The members subsequently signed a mutual non-aggression pact and pledged to establish a permanent mechanism for conflict prevention. However, relations between the three countries have at times been tense, and the MRU has failed to live up to its original ideals. [3](p.3)

**5.25** For years there has been tension and conflict between Liberia and Guinea. Between August 2000 and April 2001 forces loyal to President Taylor attacked southern Guinea and caused unrest and destruction. Guinea responded to these incursions, and there were clashes between Guinean forces and supporters of the Taylor regime on their common border. Liberia also accused Guinea of sponsoring LURD, and permitting it to use Guinea as a base for supplies and recruits, a charge that Guinea has denied. [1b](p.2584-2585)[3](p.3)

**5.26** Liberia was also involved in the later stages of the uprising in Côte d'Ivoire. Liberian troops, militia groups and mercenaries have been involved in fighting, looting and human rights abuses in the west of that country. Liberian civilians fleeing the conflict have faced reprisals from the local Ivorian population. [3](p.3)

## Prisons and Prison conditions

**5.27** According to the United States State Department Country Report for 2003 “Prison conditions remained harsh and in some cases life threatening. There were credible reports of unofficial detention facilities, including one at the Executive Mansion, in which detainees were held without charge and in some cases tortured. The Government did not provide detainees or prisoners with adequate food or medical care. Cells at Monrovia Central Prison were overcrowded, mostly with detainees awaiting trial. Similar conditions existed in the Barclay Training Center military stockade. In some counties, the structure that serves as a jail is a container with bars at one end. There also were reports that local officials forced prisoners to work for them.” [2a](p.4-5) The United States State Department also reported that since the NTGL came to power there have been no reports of secret detention facilities, and that “At year's end [2003], there were no political prisoners.” [2a](p.7)

**5.28** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that “Women, who constituted approximately 5 percent of the prison population, were held in separate cells. Their conditions were comparable to those of the male prisoners and detainees. There were no separate facilities for juvenile offenders. Women and particularly juveniles were subject to abuse by guards or other inmates. Convicted prisoners and detainees awaiting trial were not held in separate facilities.” [2a](p.5)

**5.29** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that the authorities usually permitted prison visits and “The Government generally permitted the independent monitoring of prison conditions by local human rights groups, the media, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The ICRC often was allowed to visit persons held in prison facilities and police detention centers without third parties present and to make regular repeat visits, including to Gbatata [a security-training base where torture and other abuses had been reported]. Access generally was denied to unofficial detention centers.” [2a](p.5)

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## Armed forces

**5.30** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that “During the Taylor administration, the regular security forces included: The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL); the Liberia National Police (LNP), which had primary responsibility for internal security; the LNP Special Operations Division (SOD); the Antiterrorist Unit (ATU), composed of an elite special forces group consisting of foreign nationals from Burkina Faso and the Gambia, as well as former Revolutionary United Front (RUF) combatants from Sierra Leone; and the Special Security Service (SSS), a large, heavily armed executive protective force. The NTGL dissolved the ATU and the SOD. There also were numerous irregular security services attached to certain key ministries and parastatal corporations, who did not belong to a permanent, organized military force and whose responsibilities appeared to be poorly defined. Other militia elements consisted primarily of young soldiers who were armed but not trained. These irregulars were the primary fighters during the

conflict and the first line of defense--or offense--for the Government. During the year [2003], several thousand government security forces were deployed in northern and southeastern counties fighting LURD and MODEL. As fighting intensified, security forces frequently acted independently of government authority, particularly in rural areas. Members of the security forces committed numerous, serious human rights abuses.” [2a](p.1)

**5.31** All sides in the recent violence forcibly recruited children. Some of these were employed as soldiers, or in a support capacity. The precise figure is hard to gauge, but a recent Human Rights Watch report estimated that there were 15,000 children, of both sexes, who have yet to be demobilised. Provision for the re-integration into society remains limited, but NGOs are beginning to deploy to address this need. [2a](p.16)[16b]

## **Military Service**

**5.32** There is no conscription in Liberia. However, both rebel and Government militias have forcibly recruited people into their ranks, and these recruits have included children. [2a](p.17-18)[5a](p.1)[9]

## **Medical Services**

**5.33** The prevalence of HIV/AIDS is hard to estimate because of unrest, but in 1999 it was estimated to be 2.8% of the population. However, there are indications that the true percentage is much higher, as the level of untreated sexually transmitted diseases is very high, and this is probably reflected in the percentage of the population with HIV/AIDS. A recent report put the figure for those aged 15 to 49 years at an estimated 8.2%. [8][10](p.1) Infant mortality and maternal mortality rates are high, and life expectancy is low at around 42 years of age. [11](p.3)

**5.34** The medical infrastructure remains under-funded and under-resourced. The health system had already been damaged by years of civil conflict, and was in a poor state of repair, prior to the latest upsurge in violence. [1a](p.612)[8] The situation remains poor, even in areas where it is relatively peaceful. There have been outbreaks of disease throughout the country, and this can be attributed to a lack of basic resources, and many Liberians still depended on NGOs for basic medical care. UNMIL has provided some assistance with opening up local health care centres, and identifying the needs of the local population, but this is very limited. [8][12b]

## **People with disabilities**

**5.35** According to the United States State Department Country Report for 2003 “As a result of the civil wars, a large number of persons had permanent disabilities, in addition to those disabled by accident or illness. It is illegal to discriminate against persons with disabilities; however, in practice they did not enjoy equal access to public buildings or government services. No laws mandate accessibility to public buildings or services. Persons with disabilities faced discrimination, particularly in rural areas. Babies with deformities often were abandoned. Some NGOs provided services to persons with disabilities.” [2a](p.16)

## **Educational System**

**5.36** Primary and secondary education is largely free, and officially compulsory between the ages of 7 and 16 years. However, the closure or disruption of educational institutions during the civil conflict has deprived many children of even the most basic education. [1b](p.2586)[2a](p.16)

**5.37** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that “The Government generally was unable to provide for the education and health of children. Due to the poor condition of government schools, many children who attended school, particularly in Monrovia, went to private institutions. Since many private schools still needed to be refurbished due to wartime damage, school fees remained relatively high, thereby making education unattainable for many school-age children. In both public and private schools, families of children often were asked to provide their own books, pencils, paper, and even desks. In November [2003], UNICEF [United Nations Children’s Fund] launched a “Back to School” campaign, which began when schools in Monrovia opened for the first time since the June fighting, and provided books, pens, and other teaching materials to children. In 2001 1.05 million out of an estimated 1.7 million school-age children, less than half of whom were girls, were enrolled in primary and secondary schools. Expenditures on education were estimated at \$2.4 million (167 million Liberian Dollars). In 2000 the literacy rate was 70 percent for boys and 37 percent for girls.” [2a](p.16)

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## **6. Human Rights**

### **6.A Human Rights Issues**

#### **Overview**

**6.1** A brief outline of the human rights situation was given in the United States State Department Country Report for 2003 “Prior to the resignation of President Taylor, the Government’s human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit numerous, serious abuses. The security forces committed many unlawful killings, including possible summary executions, and they were accused of the disappearances of numerous persons, particularly ethnic Mandingos suspected of antigovernment sympathies. Security forces frequently tortured, beat, and otherwise abused or humiliated citizens. Prison conditions remained harsh and sometimes life threatening. Impunity was a serious problem. The Government investigated some of the alleged abuses by the security forces; however, abusers rarely were charged or disciplined. Security forces continued to use arbitrary arrest and detention, and lengthy pretrial detention remained common. The judicial system was unable to ensure citizens’ rights to due process and a fair trial. In some rural areas where the judiciary had not been reestablished, clan chieftains administered criminal justice through the traditional practice of trial-by-ordeal; authorities tacitly condoned this practice. Security forces violated citizens’ privacy rights. The Government restricted

freedom of speech and of the press; it detained, threatened, and intimidated journalists. Security forces restricted freedom of movement. Ritualistic killings also persisted. Security forces frequently harassed human rights monitors. Violence and discrimination against women remained problems. The welfare of children widely remained neglected, and female genital mutilation (FGM) continued to be practiced. Societal ethnic discrimination remained widespread, ethnic differences continued to generate violence and political tensions, and the Taylor administration continued to discriminate against groups that had opposed Taylor in the civil war, particularly the Mandingo and the Krahn ethnic groups. Forced labor persisted in rural areas. Child labor remained widespread, and there were reports of forced child labor. There were reports of trafficking.” [2a] (p.2)

**6.2** The United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office stated in their country profile of January 2004, that “President Taylor’s regime was contemptuous of democratic principles and human rights. Taylor used the escalating conflict in Liberia to justify increased repression. Arbitrary arrests, forced conscription and the reported torture and murder of suspected dissident sympathisers, human rights campaigners and journalists became commonplace. The continuing disregard for human rights where civil conflict still exists is of concern. The warring factions have used sexual violence and torture as weapons; used child soldiers and involved children in the conflict. This continues to be a problem in the transition to peace. The UN Mission in Liberia has a robust mandate to monitor and uphold human rights and protect civilians.” [3](p.5)

**6.3** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 also stated that there had been an improvement in the Government’s attitude to human rights issues since the interim Government came to power. According to this report “There were no reports that the NTGL committed any serious human rights violations in its first few months in office. NTGL officials have publicly stated they would continue to work with the international community toward restructuring and reforming state and local security.” [2a](p.2) However, during 2003 “Rebels fighting in the northwest and the southeast committed numerous serious human rights abuses. The absence of independent observers in rebel-controlled areas made documentation of such abuses difficult.” [2a](p.2)

## **Freedom of Speech and the Media**

**6.4** The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press. However, the Taylor Government restricted these rights. Security agents threatened, detained, and assaulted journalists and also intimidated many others into self-censorship. Politicians, who objected to articles that criticised them, were able to have stories altered or dropped. However, in the later half of 2003 harassment and censorship of the media decreased significantly. Due to the poor economic situation, and the dependence on generators requiring expensive fuel, most radio stations were limited in the number of hours in which they could broadcast during the day, and in some cases these stations had to cease operation for short periods of time. This was a particular problem during the violence from June to July 2003. [2a](p.9-10)

**6.5** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted “In Monrovia

there were 18 newspapers that published during the year [2003], with varying degrees of regularity. Two were independent dailies and five usually appeared at least once a week. Their political orientation ranged between pro-government and critical of the Government. The Public Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism published one newspaper, and the communications network owned by the President published a weekly newspaper. After President Taylor left the country, his newspaper stopped publishing and his radio station stopped broadcasting.” [2a](p.9)

**6.6** According to the United States State Department Country Report for 2003 “Newspaper availability fluctuated during the year [2003]. All newspapers were printed through one printing facility. The Taylor administration had at times pressured the managers of the facility not to print articles the Government perceived to be unfavorable. To meet the costs of production, the typical newspaper's eight pages included two or three pages of advertisements or paid announcements. Some articles were the result of gifts or money that supplemented reporters' meager salaries.” [2a](p.9-10)

**6.7** Liberia's media is highly dependent on radio. According to the United States State Department Country Report for 2003 “Due to the high price of newspapers, the high rate of illiteracy (estimated at 75 percent), high transportation costs, and the poor state of roads elsewhere in the country, newspaper distribution generally was limited to the Monrovia region. As a result, radio was the primary means of mass communication. There were a number of FM stations in Monrovia. There also was the state-run national station (ELBC), a FM station operated by President Taylor's private Liberia Communications Network (LCN), which closed after Taylor left. There were at least five new FM stations on the airwaves: Power FM, King's FM, UNMIL Radio, and Radio LIJ. ELBC, and Radio Veritas, which was operated under the Catholic Archdiocese, also broadcast on short-wave frequencies strong enough to reach all parts of the country. In November, Chairman Bryant lifted the ban on Star Radio, an independent radio station closed by former President Taylor in 2000. DC-101 was broadcasting at year's end [2003], and UNMIL Radio also began broadcasting in December [2003].” [2a](p.10) The same report noted that “Call-in radio talk shows were popular and frequently a forum for both government and opposition viewpoints. Interviews with prominent persons were broadcast frequently. DC-101 removed its popular talk show DC Talk off the air after government operatives threatened the show's host and the station management for condoning and preaching anti-government sentiments.” [2a](p.10)

**6.8** Access to other forms of electronic media is limited. The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that “Television was limited to those who could purchase sets, the generators, and fuel to provide electricity. For those persons and businesses with satellite capability, CNN was generally available. There were two television stations: LCN, owned by then-President Taylor, and the Ducor Broadcasting Corporation, which was privately owned but supplied with a generator by President Taylor. LCN closed down after Taylor's August 11 [2003] departure from office. Ducor radio FM101 and television closed during the June-August fighting and resumed broadcasting after the fighting.” [2a](p.10) The report added that “The Government did not specifically restrict or limit access to the Internet; it was available

to those who could afford it. Several Internet cafes operated in Monrovia, although relatively high fees limited access. Prior to President Taylor's resignation, the Government continued to charge that opponents used the Internet to wage a propaganda war. However, the Ministry of Information also maintained an unofficial website that promoted a pro-government view of the country. Two Internet Service Providers (ISPs) operated in Monrovia and both were linked to prominent persons. Some persons believed that government security personnel monitored the Internet, particularly e-mail." [2a](p.11)

**6.9** In 2003 the Government was generally tolerant of the media, the United States State Department Country Report for 2003 observed that "With some notable exceptions, government officials reluctantly tolerated the press; however, they frequently criticized the media publicly for what they considered negative reporting. Requirements for foreign journalists, including a minimum 72-hour advance notice of the intent to enter the country and a 24-hour waiting period for accreditation after arrival remained in force. During the crisis, international correspondents were charged frequent and irregular accreditation fees. In mid-June [2003], the Government suspended all foreign press credentials for 2 days in response to an article accusing then-President Taylor of "returning to cannibalism." The Government attempted to intimidate some journalists during that period. The Government order that required local journalists to clear reporting on the insurgency prior to publication, generally was obeyed out of fear of government retribution." [2a](p.10)

**6.10** In the second half of 2003, the Government demonstrated a more co-operative attitude to the media, particularly the international media. The Government permitted a significant volume of reporting on the violence during June and July 2003, and imposed little censorship on what was reported. However, local media was unable to publish during this period. Following President Taylor's resignation, the local press was able to report, and Government harassment and interference declined significantly from that encountered earlier in 2003. [2a](p.10-11)

## **Journalists**

**6.11** Under the Taylor Government there were incidents of brief detention of journalists, and the closing of radio stations. However, in June 2003, the Media Foundation of West Africa (MFWA) stated that alleged Government security and irregular forces, were systematically targeting journalists and human rights activists in Monrovia. Harassment included incidents of looting, arson, and rape. [2a](p.10-11)

**6.12** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that "There were several attacks on the press during the year [2003] by unknown persons. For example, on June 5 [2003], armed men assaulted and robbed The News reporter Stanley McGill. A week earlier, three armed men who appeared to be wearing ATU uniforms assaulted him. On June 12 [2003], alleged LURD rebels abducted three journalists, Bobby Tapson and Bill Jarkloh, both of the The News, and Joe Watson of the Liberia Broadcasting System. The three men were reported released several days later. On June 12 [2003], armed men looted the home of Independent journalist Lyndon Ponnies. The whereabouts of his family was unknown at year's end [2003]. The MFWA reported that the homes of three other journalists had been looted and set ablaze in June [2003]." [2a] (p.10-11)

## Freedom of Religion

**6.13** The United States State Department Religious Freedom Report 2003 stated that “The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some exceptions. There is no established state religion. However, government ceremonies invariably open and close with prayer and may include the singing of hymns. The prayers and hymns usually are Christian but occasionally are Muslim.” [2b](p.1)

**6.14** According to the United States State Department Religious Freedom Report 2003, “All organizations, including religious groups, must register their articles of incorporation with the Government, along with a statement of the purpose of the organization; however, traditional indigenous religious groups are not required to register, and generally do not register. Registration is routine, and there have been no reports that the registration process is burdensome or discriminatory in its administration.” [2b](p.1)

**6.15** The United States State Department Religious Freedom Report 2003 stated that “After Charles Taylor became President, he effectively divided the National Muslim Council by working behind the scenes to seed the Council with his loyalists. Specifically, to undermine the independence of the Council, President Taylor sponsored the expulsion of Sheik Kafumba Konneh as Chairman and engineered the subsequent appointment of Alhaji Jakiray Taylor as Chairman, one of his loyalists within the country's Islamic Community. Alhaji Jakaity Taylor's position has been vacant since his death in late April. The National Muslim Council of Liberia remains divided between Taylor's supporters and Sheik Kafumba Konneh's supporters. In his capacity as Chairman of the National Muslim Council, Sheik Kafumba Konneh joined the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRC), a well-known organization led by Archbishop Francis that has tried to coordinate peace efforts between the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and rebels and the government, as Vice President. He has retained that position on the Inter-Religious Council (IRC) despite losing the Chair of the National Muslim Council.” [2b](p.1-2)

**6.16** According to the United States State Department Religious Freedom Report 2003 “Although the law prohibits religious discrimination, Islamic leaders complained of government discrimination against Muslims. Although there are some Muslims in senior government positions, many Muslims believe that they are bypassed for desirable jobs. Many Muslim business proprietors believe that the Government's decision to enforce an old statute prohibiting business on Sunday discriminates against them. Most Mandingos, and hence most Muslims, were allied with factions that opposed Taylor during the 1989–1996 civil war and still belong to opposition parties.” [2b](p.2)

**6.17** Ritualised murder has also been reported, but given the nature of these activities there is little information on them. According to the United States State Department Religious Freedom Report 2003 “Little reliable information is readily



available about traditional associated with ritual (sic) killings. Ritual killings, in which body parts used in traditional indigenous rituals are removed from the victim, continued to occur. The number of such killings was difficult to ascertain, since police often described deaths as accidents even when body parts were removed. Deaths that appear to be natural or accidental sometimes are rumored to be the work of ritual killers. It is believed that practitioners of traditional indigenous religions among the Grebo and Krahn ethnic groups concentrated in the southeastern counties most commonly engage in ritual killings. The victims usually are members of the religious group performing the ritual and body parts are removed from a member whom the group believes to be powerful are believed to be the most effective ritually. Body parts most frequently removed include the heart, liver, and genitals. The rituals have been reported in some cases to entail eating body parts, and the underlying religious beliefs may be related to incidents during the civil war in which faction leaders sometimes ate (and in which one faction leader had himself filmed eating) body parts of former leaders of rival factions. Removal of body parts for use in traditional rituals is believed to be the motive for ritual killings, rather than an abuse incidental to killings committed for other motives. Ritual murders for the purpose of obtaining body parts traditionally were committed by religious group members called "heart men;" however, since the civil war, common criminals also may sell body parts." [2b](p.3) In March 2004, women in Monrovia protested against these killings, and the authorities' failure to arrest those responsible. There appears to have been a recent upsurge in these murders, with children being targeted, and a lack of resources has hampered an effective response to these crimes. [7g]

## **Religious groups**

**6.18** Christianity, or Christianity with elements of traditional indigenous religions, is practised by approximately 40% of the population. An estimated 40% practice traditional indigenous religions exclusively. Islam is followed by 20% of the population, although Islam continued to gain adherents. The Lutheran, Baptist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, United Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal (AME), and AME Zion denominations, as well as several Pentecostal churches are all represented within the Christian community. Some of the Pentecostal movements are independent, while others are affiliated with churches outside the country. There is also a small Baha'i community. [2b](p.1)

**6.19** Christianity, traditional indigenous religions, and syncretistic religions that combine elements of both Christianity and traditional indigenous religions are found throughout Liberia. Islam is prevalent only among members of the Mandingo ethnic group, who are concentrated in the northern and eastern counties, and among the Vai ethnic group in the northwest. [2b](p.1)

## **Freedom of Assembly & Association**

**6.20** The Constitution provides for the right of peaceful assembly, but at times the Government has limited this right. During the second half of 2003, neither President Blah nor the NTGL limited gatherings, but few such gatherings occurred. [2a](p.11-12)

**6.21** The Government generally permitted demonstrations during 2003. However, in

June and July 2003, as the situation in the country deteriorated, there were a number of spontaneous demonstrations that the Government tried to forcibly prevent. There were also several clashes between demonstrators seeking peace and international assistance, and pro-government demonstrators. [2a](p.11-12)

**6.22** The Constitution provides for the right of association, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. There were 18 political parties registered by the end of 2003. Dozens of civil society organisations were active during 2003, these addressed a wide range of issues including human rights, women's issues, development objectives, poverty alleviation, health concerns, and worker's associations. [2a](p.11-12)

## **Employment Rights**

**6.23** The Constitution provides that workers have the right to associate in trade unions, except for members of the military and police, and workers are allowed to join unions. The Constitution also provides that unions are prohibited from engaging in partisan political activity, but Government interference in union activities, especially union elections and leadership struggles, was common both before and during the civil war. Economic activity was interrupted by the war, but unions proliferated. There are approximately 30 functioning unions organised loosely under two umbrella groups, the Federation of Liberian Trade Unions and the Congress of Liberian Trade Unions, with the common objective of protecting the rights of their 60,000 members, who were largely unemployed. The actual power that the unions exercised was extremely limited. Since the country's work force is largely illiterate, economic activities beyond the subsistence level were very limited, and the labour laws tend to favour management. [2a](p.17)

**6.24** During 2003, the Government strictly enforced the union registration requirements. Applicants needed to register at two different ministries, and processing time was arbitrary, taking only a few days for some, with registration never being issued to others. Labour unions traditionally have been affiliated with international labour groups such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. [2a](p.17)

**6.25** Except for civil servants, workers (including employees of public corporations and autonomous agencies) have the right to organise and bargain collectively. In the past, agreements were negotiated freely between workers and their employers without government interference; however, these rights were largely unused during 2003 because of the lack of economic activity. Labour laws provide for the right to strike, but these were nullified by a People's Redemption Council decree in 1984 that outlawed strikes. However, this decree has not been enforced for many years. Due to the damage done to the economy by years of civil conflict, and the estimated 80% unemployment rate, strikes are infrequent. [2a](p.17)

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## **People Trafficking**

**6.26** The law does not prohibit trafficking in persons; however, there were reports that persons were trafficked to, from, or within the country. Forced labour is common, particularly that of children, and, given the unrest in Liberia, it is possible that trafficking would not be reported. [2a](p.18)

## **Freedom of Movement**

**6.27** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that "The Constitution provides for these rights; however, government elements, the LURD, and MODEL restricted them in practice. Government security forces, LURD, and MODEL maintained checkpoints where travelers routinely were subjected to arbitrary searches and petty extortion; there were some reports that members of the SOD raped persons at checkpoints. Government security forces, LURD, and MODEL were also accused of beating and robbing IDPs [Internally Displaced Persons] fleeing fighting throughout the country." [2a](p.13) After President Taylor stood down from office the report noted "In October [2003], President Blah suspended the requirement of exit visas for citizens to leave the country. Passport services remained partially suspended during the year [2003]. Prospective travelers were able to obtain passports through irregular means, such as contacting an associate of President Taylor and paying a bribe." [2a](p.13)

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## **6.B Human Rights - Specific Groups**

### **Ethnic Groups**

**6.28** There are 16 ethnic groups, and these indigenous tribes are the Kpelle, Bassa, Gio, Kru, Grebo, Mano, Krahn, Gola, Gbandi, Loma, Kissi, Vai, Dei, Bella, Mandingo, and Mende. [6](p.3) The Kpelle in central and western Liberia is the largest ethnic group and makes up 20%, the Bassa make up 16%, the Gio make up 8% and Kru make up 7%. The remaining ethnic groups account for 49% of the population. Americo-Liberians, who are descendants of freed slaves that arrived in Liberia early in 1821, make up an estimated 5% of the population. There also is a sizeable number of Lebanese, Indians and other West African nationals who make up a significant part of Liberia's business community. The Americo-Liberian minority dominated the Government through the True Whig party until 1980. The indigenous ethnic groups generally speak distinct primary languages, and they are concentrated regionally. No ethnic group constitutes a majority of the population. [2a](p.16)[2c](p.2)[3](p.1)[6](p.3)

**6.29** Although the Constitution bans ethnic discrimination, it also provides that only "persons who are Negroes or of Negro descent" may be citizens or own land. Many persons of Lebanese and Asian descent who were born or have lived most of their lives in the country are denied full rights as a result of this racial distinction. [2a](p.16)[17b](p.1-2)

## **Mandingos**

**6.30** Many members of the predominantly Muslim Mandingo minority encountered hostility from the Taylor regime, which viewed them as being opposed to his rule. There was also ethnic tension in recent years, between the Mandingos and the Lormas in Lofa County. [2a](p.1&12) LURD has drawn much of its support from the Mandingos, and its success has allowed some of them to return to Lofa country, and parts of Bong and Nimba counties, which are under LURD control. [2a](p.16-17)[7a](p.1-2)

## **Krahn**

**6.31** The Krahn are a southern based ethnic group, who held considerable power under the Doe regime, when Krahn dominated both the Government and the armed forces. This caused resentment, and was one of the reasons for the unpopularity of the Doe regime. [2c](p.2-3) MODEL has drawn much of its support from the Krahn tribe. [7a](p.1-2)

## **Women**

**6.32** Domestic violence against women is extensive, neither the Government, the courts, nor the media have addressed abuse as a serious problem. Several NGOs in Monrovia and Buchanan continued programmes to treat abused women and girls and increase awareness of their rights. [2a](p.15)

**6.33** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that FGM continues to be common in Liberia “FGM traditionally was performed on young girls in northern, western, and central ethnic groups, particularly in rural areas. Prior to the onset of the civil war in 1989, approximately 50 percent of women in rural areas between the ages of 8 and 18 were subjected to FGM. Social structures and traditional institutions, such as the secret societies that often performed FGM as an initiation rite, were undermined by the war. While many experts believed that the incidence of FGM dropped to as low as 10 percent. Traditional societies were reestablishing themselves throughout the country, and the practice of FGM continued. The most extreme form of FGM, infibulation, was not practiced. The Government took no action against FGM during the year [2003]. The Association of Female Lawyers in Liberia (AFELL) also spoke out against FGM.” [2a](p.15)

**6.34** Women who were married under civil law can inherit land and property; however, women who married under traditional laws are considered the property of their husbands and are not entitled to inherit from their husbands or retain custody of their children if their husbands die. Women's organisations continued to press for legislation on behalf of inheritance rights in traditional marriages. [2a](p.15)

**6.35** Professional women's groups, including lawyers, market women, and businesswomen, remained vocal about their concerns regarding social issues. However, Government officials often responded negatively to public criticism. [2a](p.15)

**6.36** In the aftermath of the recent violence in Liberia, gunmen from militias raped women who had been displaced. All sides committed these crimes, and the authorities have been unable to bring those responsible to justice. These crimes

would appear to be opportunistic and indiscriminate, and to have been a result of the indiscipline. [5c](p.1-3)[5h](p.1-2)[16a]

## Children

**6.37** The law prohibits the paid employment of children under the age of 16 during school hours, but enforcement was lax and child labour was a serious and widespread problem during 2003. The Ministry of Labour frequently lacked the resources to carry out its duties. In rural areas, particularly where there were no schools, children continued to assist their parents as vendors in local markets, or by caring of younger brothers and sisters, and to work on family subsistence farms. [2a](p.18)

**6.38** Some former combatants, including some in the security forces, were accused of forcing children to work in the mining industry. Human rights groups reported instances of forced child labour in some rural areas, particularly in alluvial diamond mining. A child rights advocacy group's report on child labour in the southeastern counties and that of another prominent human rights group contradicted a government report, issued in 2002, which concluded that there was no conclusive evidence of forced child labour. The legislators from three counties accused, sued the child rights advocacy group for defaming the counties' reputations. At the end of 2003, this case had still to be heard. [2a](p.18)

**6.39** Both the Taylor Government and the rebel forces have recruited many children to serve as soldiers. Some of these children reportedly welcome this employment, either as a means of revenge, or survival. After the peace agreement in August 2003, some of these child soldiers were responsible for widespread looting and rapes, particularly of those who had been displaced by the fighting. [5a](p.1-4)[5h](p.1-2)[16b]

**6.40** All groups in the civil conflict have abducted or otherwise compelled large numbers of children to serve as soldiers, sex slaves, or in other service capacities. Mistreatment of these children by all sides was common, girls were sexually abused, some of these children were scarred with the initials of rebel groups, and the use of drugs was common. As yet, there is little assistance for the re-integration of the children into society. [16b]

**6.41** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that "There were thousands of children living on the street of Monrovia; however, it is difficult to tell who were street children, ex-combatants, or IDPs. Approximately 100 under-funded orphanages operated in and around Monrovia; however, many orphans lived outside these institutions. These institutions did not receive any government funding, but relied on private donations. Nearly all youths witnessed terrible atrocities, and some committed atrocities themselves." [2a](p.16)

## Homosexuals

**6.42** Both male and female homosexuality is illegal. There are no reports of it being widely tolerated by society, or of there being a homosexual culture in Liberia. [13a](p.1-4)[13b](p.1-3)

## 6.C Human Rights - Other Issues

### Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

**6.43** According to the United States State Department Country Report for 2003 “ The law provides for the granting of asylum and refugee status to persons who meet the definition in the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. In practice, the Government provided protection against refoulement and granted refugee status or asylum. The Government provided temporary protection to nearly 20,000 refugees, the vast majority of whom were from Sierra Leone. Between 10,000 to 15,000 refugees from Sierra Leone repatriated during the year [2003]. The Government generally cooperated with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees; however, government elements, LURD, and MODEL allegedly were responsible for hundreds of cases of abuse against individual refugees.” [2a](p.13) According to a recent UNHCR press release, “An estimated 13,000 Sierra Leonean refugees remain in camps around Monrovia. Another 25,000 may not be registered with UNHCR in Liberia. UNHCR hopes that more of them will register for voluntary repatriation before the cut-off date for return convoys and assistance in June [2004].” [17c](p.2)

**6.44** In September 2003 there were an estimated 300,000 IDPs sheltering within Monrovia. Incidents of rape and theft from IDPs were reported. Both forces loyal to the Taylor Government and rebels have committed these crimes, but they appear to have been mainly perpetrated by members of various militias. [5i](p.1-3)[14c](p.1)

**6.45** The security situation has improved with the deployment of peacekeepers, but the needs of IDPs remain to be addressed. According to the UNHCR in a recent press release there were an estimated 320,000 Liberian refugees in neighbouring countries, and 500,000 IDPs within the country. [12c][17c](p.2)

### United Nations

**6.46** Liberia is referred to under Security Council Resolution 1343 (2001), and is subject to a sanction regime. The reason for this action is because of the Taylor Government's support for RUF in Sierra Leone. Under this resolution the export of diamonds is proscribed, and there is an embargo on the importation of arms. [3](p.4)[7e](p.1-2)[18a](p.1-7) Some Liberians and foreign nationals are also subject to a visa ban, because of their involvement with RUF, and in UN proscribed activities within Liberia. [18a](p.4&5)[18b](p.1-7)

**6.47** On the 1 August 2003, the UN Security Council sanctioned the deployment of a multi-national peacekeeping force to the region. This was at the request of the Secretary - General, and adopted as Resolution 1497 (2003). [18c](p.1-3) Under Resolution 1509 (2003), a United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was sanctioned for a period of twelve months. This resolution stated that UNMIL was to be made up

of 15,000 peacekeepers, whose primary mission is to monitor the peace agreement, and assist in the maintenance of law and order. [18d](p.3)

## **Humanitarian situation**

**6.48** The provisions of the peace agreement of 18 August 2003, allowed for the creation of a peacekeeping force, the disengagement of opposing forces, and respect for a general cease-fire. On 4 August 2003, the first units of the ECOMIL peacekeeping force began to arrive. Both rebel and Government forces withdrew from Monrovia, and allowed peacekeepers to operate within the city. An American force was also briefly deployed. [16a][18e](p.1)

**6.49** Conditions within Monrovia have improved, but the provision of basic services remains poor. In rural areas, the general lawlessness has affected the provision of aid, and made reporting on conditions within these areas difficult. [12b][16a]

**6.50** In July 2003 the UNHCR requested, that in view of the country conditions at that time, Governments refrain from enforcing the removal of failed Liberian asylum seekers for a period of at least six months. [17a](p2) In late 2003, and the early part of 2004, an increasing number of Liberians returned to Liberia from neighbouring countries. The UNHCR has given a figure of 6,000 Liberians returning in the second half of 2003, and in the first two months of 2004 nearly 3,000 Liberians were reported to have returned. Those returning did so through their own initiative, as there is no return programme for refugees at the present time. [51](p.1-2)[17c](p.1-2)

**6.51** The UNHCR is attempting to assist those who have returned, and to evaluate their needs. However, many remain in camps within safe areas, as they cannot return to their homes, which are in areas that remain insecure. The local infrastructure within these areas has also been destroyed due to the recent fighting. Those returning are adding to the large number of IDPs who are already receiving assistance. The UNHCR has expressed its intention to expand its operations to other parts of country as soon as the security situation improves. [51](p.1-2)[17c](p.1-2)[18f](p.10-12)

**6.52** While the improved security situation within Liberia would appear to be a factor, there may be other reasons for these spontaneous returns. Many have returned from Sierra Leone, where there have recently been violent clashes between refugees and the host communities. Many Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone are housed in camps, and local people who may either resent their presence, or in retaliation for perceived criminal activity, have attacked these camps. [51](p.1-2)[14d]

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## **ANNEX A: Chronology of major events**

**1847** - Liberia, was founded by freed African slaves, as Africa's first independent republic on 26 July 1847.

**1871** - Americo-Liberian True Whig Party begin 109 years of uninterrupted political rule.

**1980 - April**, Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe staged a successful coup against President Tolbert. The People's Redemption Council (PRC) government becomes is Liberia's first administration to be led by members of the indigenous population.

**1989 - December**, armed insurrection in Nimba county by Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) begins the seven year civil war.

**1990** - The NPFL overcome government troops in Nimba county and go on to control all Liberian territory except Monrovia and its environs by May. The NPFL attacks government troops defending Monrovia and the Independent NPFL (INPFL) emerges. In August, Western diplomatic staffs are evacuated from Monrovia. ECOMOG troops arrive in Liberia in late August, and about the same time the Armed Forces Liberia (AFL) and INPFL formed an alliance against the NPFL, but armed clashes between the AFL and INPFL begin soon after. Doe is captured and executed by the INPFL. ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) establishes a protectorate around Monrovia in October. The peace process was initiated on 30 August at the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Conference in Banjul, where Dr Amos Sawyer is elected President of a new Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU). A further step in 1990 is the Bamako Cease-fire Agreement, signed in late November, whereby Liberia is effectively partitioned between Taylor's National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government (NPRAG) and the IGNU.

**1991 - September**, former supporters of Doe who had taken refuge in Sierra Leone formed the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO), which declared its opposition to the NPFL. In October, the Yamassoukro Accord is signed, whereby all factions were to be encamped and disarmed, and national elections to be held.

**1992** - ULIMO forces engaged NPFL in Lofa county. In October, the NPFL launches attacks against Monrovia. In November, the UN Security Council imposed an arms embargo, and a special envoy to Liberia is appointed.

**1993 - July**, the IGNU, NPFL and ULIMO sign the Cotonou Agreement, whereby the IGNU is to be replaced with the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG), including a five-member Council of State, who are appointed in August. Presidential elections are scheduled for February 1994. UN establishes United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) in September.

**1994 - March**, ULIMO splits into Krahn and Mandingo factions, ULIMO J and ULIMO



K respectively. In the same month, the LNTG Council of State is inaugurated, with David Kpomakpor as chairman. In September, the Akosombo Agreement was signed by the leaders of the major factions (NPFL, AFL and ULIMO-K), providing for an immediate cease-fire, and a reconstituted Council of State, but disputes over power sharing prevent its implementation. In December, Akosombo II is signed, immediately following which a cease-fire is implemented, and a commitment to elections in late 1995 is confirmed.

**1995** - At the ECOWAS summit in August, the Abuja Accord is signed by all factions. A cease-fire is confirmed and a reconstituted Council of State (LNTG II) subsequently established in September, including leaders of the major factions (NPFL, LPC and ULIMO-K), with Wilton Sankawulo as Chairman. Elections are scheduled for August 1996, and by December ECOMOG troops were deployed.

**1996 - April**, heavy fighting breaks out in Monrovia after Taylor's troops attempted to arrest Roosevelt Johnson, recently dismissed from the ruling Council on charges of murder. Hundreds of people are killed and the city is virtually destroyed in two months of intense violence. Peace was eventually restored following a further peace agreement signed in August in Abuja (Abuja II), whereby a reconstituted Council of State, with Ruth Perry as its chairman, is to be installed in September, armed factions are to be disarmed by the end of January 1997 and elections are to be held by the end of May 1997.

**1997** - ECOMOG implemented a disarmament plan. All warring factions ordered their troops to abide by the Abuja Accord and dismantle their military wings.

**July** - Elections (originally scheduled for May) take place, with overwhelming victory for the NPP. Charles Taylor is declared President in August.

**1998 August** - tension flared around former warlord Johnson's home following the shooting of one of his bodyguards by ECOMOG troops.  
September - Johnson took refuge in the US Embassy in Monrovia following clashes between government troops and his supporters. Approximately 1 week later the US authorities fly Johnson out of the country.

**November** - 32 people, mostly ethnic Krahn supporters of Roosevelt Johnson, go on trial for treason. Johnson and another former warlord, Alhaji Kromah, are to be tried in absentia. In late 1998, ECOMOG forces begin to withdraw from Liberia.

**1999 January** - Ghana and Nigeria accuse Liberia of supporting Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone. Britain and the US threatened to suspend aid to Liberia.

**April** - Rebel forces thought to have come from Guinea attack town of Voinjama. Fighting displaces more than 25,000 people.

**September** - Guinea accused Liberian forces of entering its territory and attacking border villages.

**2000 September** - Liberian forces launched an offensive against rebels in the north. Liberia accused Guinean troops of shelling border villages.  
In 2000 the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), is first reported as being active.

**2002 – February**, In response to continuing violence within the country, and attacks on its border, a state of emergency is declared.

**2003 – March**, Opposition groups the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) launched a concerted offensive against Liberian Government forces. This captured a number of towns, and threatened the capital Monrovia.

**17 June 2003** - a meeting between the Liberian Government, LURD and MODEL was held in Accra Ghana, a truce was agreed. However, this was not respected.

**June and July** - Continued fighting between rebel and Government forces. Rebels, mostly from LURD, were able to capture areas of Monrovia, including the port area.

**11 August** - As part of an effort to achieve peace, President Taylor stood down from Office, and left the country for Nigeria. Vice President Moses Zeh Blah replaced him as interim president.

**19 August** - A peace agreement was signed in Ghana by, LURD, MODEL, and the Liberian Government.

**September/October** - UN launched a major peacekeeping mission, deploying thousands of troops.

**October** - Gyude Bryant was sworn in as head of state.

**February 2004** - International donors pledged more than \$500m in reconstruction aid.

Sources [1a][1b][7f]

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## **ANNEX B: Political Organisations**

<b>ALCOP</b>	(All Liberian Coalition Party) Led by David Kortie it came third in the 19 July 1997 elections, winning 4% of the vote, with two seats in the Senate and three in the House of Representatives.
<b>APP</b>	(Alliance of Political Parties) Alliance comprising the LAP (Liberia Action Party) and the LUP (Liberia Unification Party), it participated in the 19 July 1997 elections, obtaining two seats in the House of Representatives.
<b>ECOMOG</b>	(ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group) A peacekeeping multi-national force sent to Monrovia in August 1990 by the ECOWAS, and it left Liberia in 1999.
<b>ECOWAS</b>	(Economic Community of West African States) An intergovernmental organisation of West African states, with headquarters in Nigeria, whose aim is to promote economic development and regional co-operation.
<b>IGNU</b>	(Interim Government of National Unity) Interim Government established in Monrovia from January 1991, and was in power until March 1994, under the protection of ECOMOG troops. In March 1994, it handed over power to the Transitional Government, in accordance with the terms of the Cotonou Agreement.
<b>INPFL</b>	(Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia) A breakaway faction of the NPFL, led by Prince Yormie Johnson, a former senior NPFL lieutenant. Formed in 1990, by Prince Johnson it was disbanded in late 1992.
<b>LDF</b>	(Lofa Defence Force) Formed in 1993 to counter attacks from the Mandingo faction of ULIMO, it engaged in conflict with ULIMO forces in Lofa county. Aligned to the NPFL and led by Francis Massaquoi.
<b>LNTG</b>	(Liberian National Transitional Government) The first LNTG was installed in Monrovia in March 1994, and was presided over by a five-member Council of State, elected by the three groups which signed the Cotonou Agreement (IGNU, NPFL and ULIMO), and led by David Kpomakpor. It was re-installed following the Abuja Accord of August 1995, and led by Wilton Sankawulo, and again following a further peace agreement a year later, under the leadership of Ruth Perry.
<b>LPC</b>	(Liberia Peace Council) Formed in 1990, with predominantly Krahn support, it was engaged in conflict with NPFL forces in south-eastern Liberia from 1993, and in

1994 is said to have stepped up attacks against civilians, particularly those suspected of supporting the NPFL. Backed by the Armed Forces Liberia (AFL) and ULIMO.

- LPP** (Liberia People's Party)  
Led by Togba Nah-Tipoteh, it won 1.6% of the vote in the 19 July 1997 elections, obtaining one seat in the House of Representatives.
- LURD** (Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy)  
A rebel group reported to be backed by Guinea, and has received arms and supplies from there. LURD draws most of its support from the Mandingo ethnic group, and its leader is Sehon Damate Conneh.
- MODEL** (Movement for Democracy in Liberia )  
Southern based, backed by the Ivory Coast, and the Krahn tribe.
- NDPL** (National Democratic Party of Liberia)  
Led by Dr. George E. Saigbe Boley and a participant in the 19 July 1997 elections, it failed to gain sufficient votes to obtain any seats in either the House of Representatives or the Senate.
- NPFL** (National Patriotic Front of Liberia)  
Formed in December 1989, it began the civil war under the leadership of Charles Taylor, with an invasion into Nimba county that led to its control of large parts of Liberia. It acquired largely Gio and Mano membership, and is said to have been responsible for a number of atrocities committed against members of the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups. Between 1990 and 1994, it controlled the bulk of Liberian territory. In 1994, a substantial faction of the NPFL split from Taylor (see INPFL), ceased to be active in January 1997.
- NPP** (National Patriotic Party)  
Led by Charles Taylor, it won approximately 75% of the total vote, obtaining 21 out of the 26 seats in the Senate and 49 out of 64 in the House of Representatives in the 19 July 1997 elections.
- NPRA** (National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly)  
Led by Charles Taylor, it was the instrument of NPFL rule over the bulk of Liberian territory between 1990 and 1994.
- NTGL** (National Transitional Government of Liberia)  
A transitional Government, which took over from the interim government of Moses Blah on 14 October 2003. The Government is made up of representatives from LURD, MODEL, the former Taylor government, civil society and political parties. The NTGL is led by, former businessman, Gyude Bryant. The main task of the government is to rebuild governance institutions and to organise elections by October 2005

<b>PRC</b>	(People's Redemption Council) Established by Samuel Doe on his assumption of power in 1980 and largely dominated by his Krahn ethnic group, it lasted until his overthrow in 1990.
<b>ULIMO</b>	(United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia) Formed in 1991, by supporters of the late President Samuel Doe and members of the AFL. Split into two ethnic factions in 1994: ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K. The two factions have since effectively functioned as separate organisations.
<b>ULIMO-J</b>	(United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia-Johnson) Krahn faction of the original ULIMO, led by Roosevelt Johnson. In early 1996, ULIMO-J officials announced Johnson's deposition, resulting in a further split between Johnson's supporters and those loyal to the new leadership. In 1997, he converted the faction into a new pressure movement, called UDEMO (United Democratic Movement in Liberia), not a political party but dedicated to the principle of democratic rule.
<b>ULIMO-K</b>	(United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia-Kromah) Mandingo faction of the original ULIMO, led by Alhaji G V Kromah since 1994, ceased to be active in January 1997.
<b>UNOMIL</b>	(United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia) Established by the UN Security Council in September 1993, to monitor the cease-fire and disarmament process, supervise the demobilisation and reintegration of combatants. The UNOMIL mandate expired on 30 September 1997.
<b>UNMIL</b>	(United Nation Mission In Liberia) On 19 September 2003, the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 1509 authorising a 15,000 strong Peacekeeping force to provide security in Liberia. UNMIL began to deploy on 1 October 2003, it should be at full strength by March 2004. UNMIL has a broad and robust mandate covering peacekeeping, criminal justice, human rights, child protection, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), and public information.
<b>UP</b>	(Unity Party) Led by Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, it was the runner-up in the 19 July 1997 elections, but won only 9.6% of the total vote, thereby obtaining three seats in the Senate and seven in the House of Representatives.
<b>UPP</b>	(United People's Party) Led by Wesley Johnson, it won approximately 3% of the vote in the elections on 19 July 1997, thereby obtaining two seats in the House of Representatives.

Sources [1a][1b][3][4]

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## **ANNEX C: Prominent People**

### **BOLEY Dr. George**

Founder and leader of Liberia Peace Council. Led the NDPL in the July 1997 elections, but failed to gain sufficient votes to secure any seats in the Senate or House of Representatives.

### **BLAH Moses Zeh**

Was Vice President under President Taylor, has replaced him as interim president.

### **BRYANT Gyude**

Was appointed chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) on 14 October 2003. A former business man, he is also the present Chairman of Liberia Action Party.

### **CONNIEH Sehon Damate**

Leader of LURD. He left Liberia in 1990 for Guinea, returned briefly in 1997. He is from the Mandingo ethnic group, and is reported to have close links to the Guinean President Lansana Conteh. His estranged wife Aisha Keita Conneh is also influential within LURD, and has close links to President Conteh.

### **DOE Samuel Kanyon**

Former Non-Commissioned Officer in the Armed Forces of Liberia. Led coup against Tolbert government in 1980 and assumed power as leader of the People's Redemption Council. Publicly executed in September 1990.

### **JOHNSON Prince Yormie**

Joined Taylor's NPFL at the beginning of the civil war. Split to lead the Independent NPFL in 1990, when he tortured and killed ex-President Doe in September 1990. Fled Liberia in October 1992.

### **JOHNSON Gen. Roosevelt**

Commander of Krahn ULIMO-J faction, since it split from the original ULIMO in 1994. In 1997, converted the faction into UDEMO, and following the July elections was appointed Transport Minister in the new government.

### **JOHNSON-SIRLEAF Ellen**

Leader of the UP, which was in second place in the July 1997 elections.

### **KPOMAKPOR David**

President of the first LNTG, installed in Monrovia in March 1994 and remaining until August 1995.

### **KROMAH Alhaji G V**

Leader of the Mandingo ULIMO-K, since the original ULIMO split in 1994. In the July 1997 elections, led the ALCOP to third place. In December 1997.

### **YAYA Thomas Nimely**

Chairman of MODEL, a long time resident in America and an American citizen. He is

from the Krahn ethnic group

**PERRY Ruth**

President of LNTG in September 1996.

**SANKAWULO Prof. Wilton:**

President of the second LNTG, installed following the Abuja Accord of August 1995, and remaining for one year thereafter.

**SAWYER Dr. Amos**

Leader of the LPP, appointed as President of the IGNU in August 1990. In March 1994, handed over power to the first LNTG.

**TAYLOR Charles Ghankay**

Former President of the Republic of Liberia. Formed the NPFL and started civil war in 1989. Leader of the National Patriotic Party (NPP), he was elected President on 19 July 1997 and inaugurated on 2 August 1997. As part of a peace agreement, President Taylor stood down from Office in 11 August 2003, and then left Liberia for Nigeria.

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