



Adoption of the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Liberia
Item 6 - UN Human Rights Council
March 2021

On behalf of a coalition of Liberian and international NGOs, we welcome the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Liberia, which contains important recommendations to limit impunity for atrocities committed during the country's two armed conflicts. These include creating a war crimes court that holds fair, impartial, and independent trials of past crimes with assistance from the United Nations.

We welcome Liberia's acceptance of the recommendation to move towards the implementation of measures put forward by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to ensure accountability. We are, however, concerned that Liberia only noted the recommendation to create a war crimes court. In addition, as part of its presentation to the working group, Liberia "did not report persistent impunity for human rights violations" and claimed "cases of human rights abuses had been investigated[,] ... prosecuted and punished." Such statements are not justified by the facts given Liberia's continued lack of prosecutions of serious past crimes. Liberia's approach also runs counter to the recommendations it previously accepted during its last UPR to establish an accountability mechanism, and no progress has been observed during its most recent reporting cycle.

In 2019, hopes for justice were raised amid indications by President George Weah that he would seek the legislature's advice on establishing a war crimes court, which has been backed by activists, community leaders, legislators, and members of the general public. But the president has taken no further steps since. The government was also due to submit a report to the UN Human Rights Committee by July 2020 addressing the Committee's 2018 concluding observations that it should "establish a process of accountability," but has yet to do so. While 52 legislators endorsed a resolution supporting a war crimes court, the speaker declined to introduce the resolution for consideration. Meanwhile, human rights defenders and witnesses of alleged crimes have faced increased threats.

We welcome criminal cases that have been brought outside Liberia, as well as Liberia's cooperation with some of those initiatives, but they also underscore the lack of justice efforts in the country. The Liberian government should unequivocally support the establishment of a war crimes court and request UN assistance to do so. The government should also ensure the protection of human rights activists and witnesses. Liberia's international partners should insist that Liberia take these steps in line with the UPR recommendations and the interests of victims.

List of signatories:

The Advocates for Human Rights

Center for Justice and Accountability

Civil Society Human Rights Advocacy Platform of Liberia

Civitas Maxima

Independent Human Rights Investigators

Global Justice and Research Project (GJRP)

Human Rights Watch

Transitional Justice Working Group of Liberia