



## EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

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June 24, 2021

House Foreign Affairs Committee  
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

Hearing  
on  
Establishing a War Crimes & Economic Crimes Court for Liberia

June 21, 2021 – 12:00 p.m.  
Virtual via Cisco WebEx

### STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

Submitted by:

George S. W. Patten, Sr  
Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary  
of Liberia to the United States

Messrs. Co-Chairs:

I present my compliments and wish to refer to the June 21, 2021, hearing on the establishment of a war and economic crimes court in Liberia by the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

The Government of the Republic of Liberia wishes to thank and appreciate the Government and people of the United States for the manifold assistance to Liberia over the years - both in funding and technical support. This has helped to consolidate our peace in order to secure economic growth and development, and to strengthen the foundation of the rule of law.

The Government commends the Commission's manifold inroads on issues of human rights and accountability around the world and welcomes the Commission's discussions into the status, challenges, and opportunities for establishing war and economic crimes court in Liberia. The Government wishes to assure the Commission that pursuing accountability for crimes committed during Liberia's civil war and enhancing accountability in the use of public resources are goals being pursued by the current administration. President George M. Weah, in recognition of the need for accountability, is the only Liberian leader since the end of the civil crisis to formally engage the National Legislature on the importance of framing a national direction on the resolutions contained in the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and on the proper and legal parameters for accountability.

In a letter to the National Legislature dated September 12, 2019, the President writes: "I ... do hereby call on the National Legislature to advise and provide guidance on all legislative and other necessary measures towards the implementation of the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] report, including the establishment of the Economic and War Crimes Court." The Government wishes to apprise the Commission of the National Legislature's effort for legislative action in keeping with our constitutional requirement. The relevant committees of the Legislature have started deliberation of the matter.

The Government of Liberia is even grateful in this regard for the partnership of Nottingham University of England for sponsoring a 3-day workshop with the Judiciary Committee and the Claims and Petition Committee of the House of Representatives. The process produced a draft war crimes court statute which was submitted to the Liberia Bar Association (LBA), for review and comments. That consultation continues. The Liberian Government is grateful to USAID for providing the technical assistance for this process, and Harvard University for working with the Legislature to draw up options/model for such adventure.

Although Liberia is beset by other demanding priorities, including tackling the Covid-19 pandemic and addressing critical socio-economic challenges, it recognizes the need for accountability as the bedrock for sustainable peace.

Meanwhile, in response to President Weah's communication to the Legislature, the leadership of the Senate submitted to the plenary of the Senate on June 22, 2021, the position of the Senate on the TRC recommendations. The Senate recommended the setting up of a Transitional Justice Commission (TJC). In their advice to President Weah, the Senate said "There are many issues which pose difficulty to the implementation of some of the key recommendations of the TRC. These hindrances could be resolved by the establishment of a Transitional Justice Commission (TJC), which will build on the work of the TRC."

Liberia's democracy is vibrant, as evidenced by the regular free and fair elections which in some cases have been won by the opposition. President Weah has demonstrated his commitment to the process by conceding election defeats of his party and congratulating the winners. Liberia welcomes the pluralism and diverse opinions which characterize a true democracy, including this hearing and many other activities that seek to elevate the discussion of accountability for crimes committed during the war years.

However, the Government of Liberia is concerned that opportunistic politicians and other individuals with vested interest will use such platforms to foster selfish or pecuniary political agenda, which are not in consonance with accountability and the national interest. We note that your three witnesses were all open critics of the sitting administration, and that my offer to represent the government's position was denied.

Further, that Dr. Alan White's business partner in the [BW Global Group](#), Mr. Jeffrey Birrell, was a registered foreign agent for former presidential candidate [Benoni Wilfred Urey](#).



Further, I share with you in this testimony that when Dr. White and his partner Mr. Birrell visited the Liberian Embassy in April at my invitation, where I requested an opportunity to provide them a government perspective, they did not disclose to me their Liberia paymasters, past or present, and positioned themselves as caretakers of U.S.-Liberia policy, suggesting that if the government did not align, they would be shut-out of Congressional support.

It is incumbent upon the Commission to ascertain if funding is on-going from Liberia political leaders, directly or indirectly to witnesses that it selects.

Liberia therefore encourages the Commission to broaden the scope of this discussion to involve a wider cross-section of the Liberian society so that the best outcome for accountability can be realized.

With sentiments of my highest esteem.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'George S. W. Patten, Sr.', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

George S. W. Patten, Sr.  
Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary