



INDEPENDENT NATIONAL COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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Press Statement

Members of the Press, fellow Liberians, one and all:

Earlier this year in January, the Independent National Commission on Human Rights issued a statement recognizing the role of elections in promoting human rights, sustaining peace and enhancing democratic stability. In that statement, we called on all stakeholders to reflect on inclusion, equitable use of public resources and facilities, access to polling places, guarding against the use of inflammatory language or hate speech, free and balanced press, impartial security, and peaceful resolution of disputes among others. Today, we renew that call. The government, political parties, security apparatus, media and the general citizenry should highly consider these factors as this election is historic; the first that will see a power transition from one democratic elected government to another since 1944.

To this end, we want to congratulate everyone for the gains made thus far. The historic turnout during the voter registration to the continued commitment to the Ganta and Farmington Declarations by political parties are good signals that the Commission welcomes. While we are not yet at the end, we want to say hats off to all of us for the contributions thus far.

Nevertheless, today marks day 2 of an important and crucial activity in these elections. The elections calendar as outlined by the National Elections Commission declared, July 31, 2017 as the launch of Political campaigns. It is expected that during this campaign period, our political actors will try as much as possible to do all it takes in getting the requisite support to become victorious. We are aware that rallies will be held; marches will be carried out, and speeches will be made.

Fellow Liberians, cognizant of these facts, the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) is therefore calling on all actors (political party executives and workers; the people and citizen of Liberia and specifically the youth) to be reflective of our past and conduct themselves in a manner that bespeaks peace, development, rule of law and civility. We are imploring the conscience of our young people, who due to their population have the average age of registered voters to refuse being used by politicians as harbinger of violence, destruction and setback.

Our appeal for calm and respect for the rule of law during this campaign season hinges on the historical antecedents of the war years and its long effects on Liberia and other nations. The lessons that violence

and abuse of human rights taught us are unforgettable and haunting nightmares in our collective and individual lives. Since 2003, we as a people have made the decision never to slide back down that road. We are also conscious of the fact that we are humans, who might be tempted to forget the past. It is our anticipation that by this reminder, Liberians will operate and conduct themselves in a framework befitting of a peace loving nation.

As we proceed in these campaign times threading very cautiously with fear of triggers of violence; we should also bear in mind that election is not necessarily the panacea for social national problems but rather a process that leads to identifying and solving problems. Our problems will persist if we let our eyes off the essence of this election. This election comes as a platform through which we can express our thoughts for the development of the country, constructively provide alternatives and construct a workable plan that will see the future of this country shining bright as the true Lone Star of this precious continent. As we trade our thoughts during these campaign seasons, we should do it void of insults, discrimination, violence, animosity and hate. In our ideological differences, we should learn to love as one nation and one people. The election will come and go but we as citizens and country will remain. Therefore what matters most is the relationship that we forge.

We have enjoyed the silence of the guns for more than a decade; we have initiated the process of development though we are still not where we want to be. But if we believe that we need to continue from where we are and make the necessary adjustments, where necessary, peace building and state building should be the center of our campaign messages and contents of our platform. If we must truly reconcile as a people, the time to demonstrate that is now. The relationship we build and the respect we show for one another during these elections will serve as the inspiration for collaboration and reconciliation when the elections are over.

Members of the press and fellow Liberians, we also want to admonish our media practitioners to exercise their reportorial duties in a manner that considers the peace, development and stability of Liberia. You are under moral obligation to ensure that in no way your pens and microphones are use as the conduit for backwardness, violence and instability. The fundamental of media ethics: accuracy, balance and clarity, should be consider at all length. As for our security institutions, we are calling on you to serve with the utmost degree of impartiality and patience. The professionalism you have maintained over the time needs to be protected jealously as a simple misstep could lead to havoc and chaos. We trust your judgment and urge you to guide our peace. Lives and properties must be protected in the ambit of the rule of law and human rights must be respected.

Finally, as the moral cornerstone of peace and human rights in this country, the INCHR is admonishing its fellow compatriots to prioritize the peace and stability of Liberia and not their personal political

interest. We ask all to see their political interests as subservient to the interest of Liberia. On this note, we are pledging our full commitment to working with all political parties and candidates to ensure a peaceful election. We will religiously follow every campaign rallies and speeches. We will not renege at confronting those who will engage in acts that can trigger violence and lead to the abuse of the rights of others.

Thank you!

For and on behalf of the Board of Commissioners on this 31st day of July, 2017

Rev. Atty. Bartholomew B. Colley

Acting Chairperson