

# Statement on the Voter Registration Exercise and Economic Situation in Liberia

By

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Ladies and gentlemen of the press, fellow Liberians, and friends of Liberia, I stand before you today to speak on the flawed first phase of the biometric voter registration exercise which ended on April 9, and the worsening economic hardship in the country.

The first phase of the biometric voter registration exercise was a disaster. The National Elections Commission of Liberia (NEC) failed to deliver on its mandate to provide a fair, transparent, and efficient voter registration process. We saw numerous system failures, including malfunctioning biometric machines, and a lack of properly trained staff.

The outcome of this flawed exercise is already evident in the low turnout of individuals eligible to register to be able to vote on October 10, 2023, particularly in areas where these failures were most pronounced. This is unacceptable and considerably calls into question the integrity of the electoral process in Liberia.

The signs of voter suppression were also evident. Reports have emerged of individuals being turned away from registration centers based on flimsy reasons. The time allotted to conduct the first phase of the voter registration, especially in the most populous county of Montserrado, was very insufficient. Also, there was the issue of inaccessibility of registration centers which saw far too many people having to travel long distances, especially in the rural areas, often times only to be told after making the long and hard journey, that, “the

system is down". This is a clear attempt to disenfranchise certain segments of the population and undermine the democratic process.

In light of this, let me strongly re-echo the fervent call by the leader of the opposition, former Vice President Joseph Nyuma Boakai, that the voter registration period be extended to allow all eligible Liberians to register so that they may be able to exercise their God-given, constitutionally-guaranteed franchise in the all-important October 10, 2023 General and Presidential Elections.

As we move forward to the second phase of the biometric voter registration exercise, we demand that the NEC do a much better job. They must ensure that the exercise is conducted with fairness, transparency, and efficiency. They must take steps to address the system failures that plagued the first phase and put in place measures to prevent voter suppression.

Meanwhile, the grinding poverty that continues to afflict our people, more so now than probably ever in our nation's history, weighs heavily on me and all well-meaning Liberians. We are not oblivious, however, of the perennial and sad reality that Liberia has always been one of the poorest countries in the world, with over 60% of the population almost always living below the poverty line, but the inexcusably patent incompetence underpinned by woeful negligence and breakdown in law and order, coupled with the lack of leadership by President George Weah, has only exacerbated the situation.

The widespread prevalence of our children on the streets selling candies, cold water, and biscuits, to name a few, rather than being in a school where they should be productively molded as our future leaders, is beyond heartbreaking.

Today, Liberians are suffering more than they have ever suffered at any point in our peacetime existence as a country. Unemployment rates

remain high, and corruption is rampant, thus undermining the country's economic potential. The future of Liberia is at stake, and we cannot afford to let it slip away.

We, therefore, call on all Liberians from all walks of life, to come together under the banner of patriotism and nationalism to RESCUE our dear country. It is time for us to put aside our differences and focus on the common good. We need a leadership that is capable, prudent, and compassionate to break our country and people free from the shackles of corruption, bad governance, and dehumanizing poverty

We need a leader who will put the interests of Liberians first, who will work tirelessly to improve the lives of our people, and who will ensure that the democratic process is upheld.

My fellow compatriots, while it may be weary and bleak today under this horrible calamity called Weah, together we can end this nightmare on October 10, 2023.

Let us continue to labor together on the noble task to build a harmonious, wholesomely functional, and prosperous Liberia for all of our people and our future generations.

May God bless us all and save our beloved Motherland!