



Statement by Cllr. N. Oswald Tweh, Sr., Minister of Justice/Attorney General, Republic of Liberia, on the Rise of Mob Violence in the Country

Ministry of Information, Cultural Affairs & Tourism
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Members of the Press
Ladies & Gentlemen:

I want to address you today on an issue that has claimed the attention of the Ministry of Justice and the entire Government of Liberia. This is the issue of the increase in mob violence in the country.

Unfortunately, we are experiencing an upward increase in mob violence. These incidents ignite quickly and become very violent. The crowd even turn on state security who may attempt to intervene. This is becoming widespread. The general wellbeing of our communities is seriously threatened by this issue. Our system of justice and the authority of government entities are being challenged.

We have seen incidents where mobs took the law into their hands and burned vehicles that were involved in accidents. There have been numerous incidents of legal surveys of land been prevented by mobs armed with cutlasses, sticks and other dangerous items. There have been incidents where the enforcement of judgments of the courts have been prevented by mobs armed with dangerous instruments. We have seen incidents in which police stations and court houses were set ablaze by angry crowds and prison facilities were vandalized, looted and prisoners set free.

There have been incidents where alleged criminals were apprehended by angry crowds, lynched, burned, and beaten. There was a recent mob action in Wealea, when the premises of the Salala Rubber Company were vandalized, a vehicle and a residence were burned, properties were looted and stolen, and a manager was threatened with physical bodily harm. We all recall the shameful mob action of violence against an elderly lady in

March of this year in Chocolate City, Gardnesville. She was accused of being a witch and was severely beaten by the residents of the community.

She was rescued from the mob, rushed to the ELWA Hospital for medical attention but unfortunately she died. We all also recall the mob violence against a lady accused of being a criminal in the commercial district of Redlight in Paynesville. She was stripped naked, severely beaten, and sexually assaulted, after she was accused by some unidentified individuals that she stole from them. Shamefully, bystanders watched without stepping in to help her.

This situation is so serious that the other day the Supreme Court of Liberia met with me, the Inspector General of the Liberia National Police and the Executive Director of the Liberia Land Authority to discuss the situation as it affects the judiciary, especially the prevention of the enforcement of judgments of the courts by angry crowds.

Our country is moving too fast down the wrong path! Mob violence has become an unfortunate stain on the fabric of our nation. We have to arrest the situation and change the course of our country. And this is what this administration has pledged to do and this is what this administration will do.

Any form of mob violence is criminal. Mob violence often leaves in its wake death, severe bodily injuries and destruction of properties. While it is criminal to engage in any illegal act, it is also criminal to damage state infrastructures or to beat a suspected criminal or to destroy private properties.

This government will not condone or tolerate mob violence. It is a violation of our laws and a violation of democratic principles and values.

This administration will uphold the rule of law. Law is the fabric that holds the society together. We Liberians have seen and experienced firsthand what happens when there is a breakdown of law and order: chaos, upheavals, and unrest with all its terrible consequences. There must be respect for the rule of law in our country. The Ministry of Justice, in collaboration with state securities agencies, will embark on the necessary measures aimed at eradicating mob violence from our society. Individuals engaging in mob violence, with the assistance of technology, including drones and social media, will be identified, arrested and penalize. Yes, there will be swift and severe consequences for those engaging in mob violence. Those involved in mob justice will be swiftly brought to real justice. We will not relent in tackling mob violence.

For any nation to prosper and progress that nation has to uphold the rule of law. This is a responsibility of both the government and the citizens. The government is under an obligation to ensure that the rule of law is upheld at all times. The citizens must ensure that they too uphold the rule of law by seeking redress through the courts, by not meting out mob justice, by adhering to laws, rules, regulations. People have to understand that

redress through lawful means takes time. Therefore, people have to be patient to allow the justice system to work.

We will work with civil society, including the Liberia Motorcycle Union and Federation of Liberian Youth, traditional and community leaders to increase public knowledge about mob violence, educate the public on the dangers and consequences of mob action, educate the public about the rule of law, and create confidence in the criminal justice system. In this light, workshops, awareness campaigns (including talk shows and radio dramatizations), and community based activities will be utilized in altering perceptions, removing misconceptions and advocating for peaceful resolutions of issues. The Government will also continue to endeavor to address socio-economic issues that may be spiking the increase in mob violence, such as high unemployment, limited access to education, etc.

Finally, we call upon all Liberians to condemn and denounce mob violence. Mob violence creates fear within the community, undermines the authority and legitimacy of our formal legal institutions and erodes trust in the government's ability to maintain law and order. We implore all Liberians to work with us in confronting and eradicating this evil from our society.

I thank you.