

ADDRESS TO THE NATION

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. GEORGE MANNEH WEAH

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

ON THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN LIBERIA

THE EXECUTIVE MANSION

CAPITOL HILL

MONROVIA, LIBERIA

8 APRIL 2020

Fellow Citizens and Foreign Residents:

We are all witnessing the devastation caused by the Coronavirus pandemic around the world. Hundreds of thousands of persons around the globe have been infected by it, thousands have died as a result of contracting it, and many more thousands are predicted to die. The disease has overwhelmed more advanced health care systems in many countries, and has brought the economies of several developed nations almost to a complete halt.

The sad reality of millions of victims and thousands of deaths around the world should give all of us cause to pause and think about what we must do collectively to protect ourselves from this dreadful pestilence. The horrific scenarios that are beginning to emerge should serve as sufficient warning for everyone of us to spring into action.

The Government of Liberia continues to work with determination, diligence, and focus, to combat this deadly COVID-19 disease. You will recall that a Special Presidential Advisory Committee on Coronavirus (SPACOC) was established two months ago, under my leadership, as soon as it was perceived that the disease was likely to develop into a global pandemic of epic proportions, that could possibly affect this country.

As Chairman of SPACOC, I have personally presided over many strategy and operational meetings, with the aim and objective of coordinating the fight against the Corona disease in Liberia.

I have also instituted the Executive Committee on Corona Virus (ECOC) as the operational arm of SPACOC that will focus on community initiatives and outreach.

As head of both committees, I am directly involved with the day-to-day activities with our health experts, members of the Cabinet, and our international partners, in order to help mitigate the spread of the virus, at the same time explore ways and means to help ease some of the economic challenges that this virus will cause to our our country and people.

Fellow Liberians:

Although our health teams are working assiduously to complete the testing of scores of contacts, we have to recognize that the COVID-19 virus has now entered a new phase in our country, as we move from protection to containment. The

dynamics of our management of the disease have been significantly changed, and will require much stronger additional measures to delay the spreading of this highly infectious virus, and keep our public safe.

Fellow Liberians:

This global pandemic is killing thousands of people around the world. It knows no borders, and there is yet no vaccination or cure. The global spread of this virus represents the greatest threat to the health and well-being of the people of Liberia since the Ebola epidemic suffered by our country from 2014 to 2016. It has already arrived in Liberia, and confirmed cases are now on the rise.

THEREFORE, by the Authority granted to me under Articles 85, 86, 87, and 88 of the Liberian Constitution, and after due consultation with the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro-Tempore of the Liberian Senate, as required by law, I, George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, hereby declare a State of Emergency, to exist in and throughout the Republic of Liberia, for a period of three (3) weeks, renewable until the threat to Liberia from the Covid-19 virus no longer exists.

My Fellow Liberians:

As a first step under the powers hereby granted me under this State of Emergency, the Speaker and the President Pro-Tempore are to convene the 54th Legislature in Joint Session on tomorrow, Thursday, the 9th of April, 2020 for justification and endorsement of this State of Emergency by Joint Resolution, in accordance with Article 88 of the Liberian Constitution.

I further announce, under this State of Emergency, that all 15 counties in the Republic of Liberia are hereby quarantined from 11:59 p.m. on Friday, April 10, 2020, until further notice. movements between counties are sstrictly prohibited.

No person shall be permitted to enter or leave or in any way cross the borders of any county into any other county, except for Montserrado County and Margibi County which are quarantined as a single unit.

As a further measure under this State of Emergency, all Liberians and residents within the borders of Montserrado County, Margibi County, Nimba County, and Grand Kru County are to STAY AT HOME for the next 14 days, beginning at 11:59 p.m. on Friday, April 10, 2020.

Throughout this period, residents may leave home only for essential journeys for reasons of health and food, which should be restricted to your local community only, and be limited to a single person per household for a maximum of one hour.

Exceptions shall be made for persons who are designated as essential staff in government offices, banks, supermarkets, and other business establishments such as hotels, petrol stations, and health facilities to travel directly to work and return directly home. All such commercial activities are to be closed no later than 3:00 p.m.

All non-essential businesses and Government offices will remain closed, with the exception of essential businesses, health facilities and a few key government offices, such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Central Bank of Liberia, the National Port Authority, the Liberia Revenue Authority, the Monrovia City Corporation, and the Liberia Broadcasting System, and accredited media, where only a skeleton staff will be given passes to work.

Other government offices may be designated as exempt based on the essential nature of their function. Meanwhile, non-exempt government employees and people in the private sector are encouraged to work from home.

Also exempted from these restrictions are: (a) production, distribution, and marketing of food, beverages, pharmaceuticals, and medicine; (b) environmental and sanitation activities; (c) members of the security forces assigned to lawful duties; (d) essential staffs of electricity, water, telecommunications, banking, and hotels, and (e) the staff of fuel stations.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs is hereby instructed to engage the leaders of the various marketing associations in counties under this STAY AT HOME order to make satisfactory arrangements about the operation of markets during this period, so as to ensure the observance of social distance and enhanced hygiene protocols.

In all other counties not under this STAY AT HOME order, residents are to stay within their respective local communities until otherwise ordered.

I have ordered the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Liberia and the Chairman of the National Joint Security to enforce this stay-home policy beginning as of the effective date.

Further measures will be imposed from time to time under this State of Emergency

Fellow Liberians:

I want to encourage Liberians and foreign residents to abide by these measures - even under the most difficult of circumstances.

We have to ask ourselves why we should abide by these measures. The answer is to simple: to save lives. Remember, the life you save may be your own, or mine.

We should all learn from the experience of Ebola. We all will have to give up certain freedoms for the time-being, until we can get through this. That is why we have found it necessary to declare this State of Emergency. Stay at home and be safe.

Fellow Liberians:

Let me now take this opportunity to give thanks and appreciation to our brave health workers, including doctors and nurses and all other persons involved in the fight against this deadly disease. Your courage, your dedication, and your professionalism inspire us all.

In this regard, I would like to call on all retired health workers in Liberia, to join hands with your counterparts to reinforce our capabilities and strengths to fight COVID-19, with your vast experience and expertise. We need all hands on deck at this time.

I ask everyone to get on board and abide by the health measures and protocols that have been introduced. The enemy today is the virus, not each other.

In the meantime, I would like to call upon all our political and religious leaders, social media groups, students, teachers, civil society and the general citizenry to join us in this fight against Corona. We are all in this together as Liberians, regardless of your political affiliation or religion. We must therefore come together as ONE PEOPLE at this critical time of peril for our Nation. Let us use our time, talents, and social media platforms to educate our people on the basic hygiene and social distance practices that can keep them safe, and to encourage them to abide by the laws and regulations.

We can defeat this virus if we all commit ourselves to respecting all the measures that have been outlined. If we are undisciplined, we will be the cause for it to

spread. But if we behave properly, and observe all regulations and health measures, we can also be the cure that will stop Corona in our country.

As I close, I ask the Almighty God to save our country Liberia, and the rest of the world from this deadly coronavirus.

My Fellow Liberians:

Let us all rise, and stand together, to fight Corona!!

Let us do it for ourselves; our children, and our country, Mama Liberia.

I thank you.