



National Civil Society Council of Liberia

Mission House

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April 28, 2020

Dr. Lawrance K. Bropleh

Chairman

Presidential Committee to Investigate Violence on Journalists

Foreign Ministry Building, Capitol Hill Monrovia, Liberia

Ref: "Withdrawal from the Presidential Committee to Investigate Violence against Journalists"

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Please accept this letter as our official withdrawal from the Presidential Committee constituted to probe violence against journalists in Liberia. Reasons for our withdrawal are based on similar concerns raised by Mr. Peter Quaqua, President of the West Africa Journalist Association (WAJA).

Since its establishment, we have yet to see much from your leadership in terms of convening meetings where the standard operating procedures (SOPs) would have been developed in relations to how the probe was going to be approached. While we patiently waited for the first convening of the Committee, we were sadly greeted with a unilateral notice of suspension of the Committee's work due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in Liberia.

Mr. Chairman, inasmuch as we would love to be a part of this very important probe to independently and meticulously investigate why journalists are constantly being harassed and their rights violated by state security personnel, we are quite mindful that your unilateral decision to suspend the work of the Committee has already undermined the essence of the investigation. Remember, we had a ten-day period to investigate and make a report to the people of Liberia, but based on your suspension for reasons we cannot second-guess, the Committee now hangs in a state of inertia. Besides, assaults on journalists contravene a number of national and international legal instruments that safeguard the rights and freedoms of journalists and whistleblowers. The Table Mountain Declaration Liberia has signed onto, amongst other things, earnestly appeals to all Africans, particularly those in power, to recognize that the political and economic progress they seek flourishes in a climate where the press is free and independent of governmental, political or economic control.

Additionally, and most importantly, we are mindful that when the state begins to drag its feet on important matters as the subject at hand, it signals a clear attempt to cleverly drag the image and integrity of the most conscious segments of the population into disrepute. If this was the intention, then it was a terrible miscalculation, which the National Civil Society Council of Liberia detests in the strongest terms. In our opinion, a decision for suspension should have only been arrived at by the convening of two-thirds majority of the membership of the Committee but to the contrary, it became a one-man show. This seriously runs in opposition to the view we espouse that collective actions must be the hallmark of an important Committee of such.

Best regards.

Respectfully,

Loretta Alethea Pope-Kai
National Chairperson

