



REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA  
**MINISTRY OF JUSTICE**

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*OFFICE OF THE MINISTER / ATTORNEY GENERAL*

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Monrovia, December 28, 2019:** The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) has received a number of requests from individuals, associations and organizations for permits and security protection to stage protests, counter-protests, demonstrations and peaceful assemblies in Monrovia. Some of the requests contain words not found in the Constitution, viz., "protest", "counter protest" and "demonstration"; while others, in their pronouncements, are advocating a "Weah Step Down" campaign, though not contained in their formal requests. The Constitution makes reference to peaceful assembly.

The many requests are being evaluated against the backdrop of the constitutional provision on the right of citizens to assemble in an orderly and peaceable manner, alongside Government's obligation and capacity to safeguard the peace and security of the State at this crucial time.

In the consideration of the citizens' right to assemble in an orderly and peaceable manner, the MOJ takes recourse to Article 17 of the 1986 Constitution, which states:

All persons, at all times, **in an orderly and peaceable manner**, shall have the right to assemble and consult upon the common good, to instruct their representatives, to petition the Government or other functionaries for the redress of grievances and to associate fully with others or refuse to associate in political parties, trade unions and other organizations(emphasis ours).

However, the MOJ notes that provisions of the Constitution must be read and interpreted holistically; and that Article 17 must be read in tandem with Article 13 (a), which states:

Every person lawfully within the Republic shall have the right to move freely throughout Liberia, to reside in any part thereof and to leave therefrom subject however to the safeguarding of public security, public order, public health or morals or the rights and freedoms of others.

The exercise of the right to assemble in an orderly and peaceable manner, as guaranteed under Article 17 of the Constitution, cannot and must not interfere or conflict with the right of the citizenry to public security and public order, as stipulated in Article 13(a) of the Constitution. Public security and public order require that during the exercise of the right to assemble in an orderly and peaceable manner, no threat is posed to the peace and security of other citizens; that respect for life and property is maintained; that there is no disruption to traffic; that there is no impediment to the free movement of other citizens; and that there is no disturbance in the commerce. Government is obliged to ensure that the rights of all are respected and protected.

Accordingly, having considered the many requests received from conflicting groups for permits and security protection to stage protests, counter-protests, demonstrations and peaceful assemblies in Monrovia, and following a review of the obligation and capacity of the Joint Security Forces to safeguard the peace and security of the State at this crucial time, the MOJ has decided to defer decisions on all requests received for permits and security protection to stage protests, counter-protests, demonstrations and assemblies until January 30, 2020. All are advised to take heed and govern themselves accordingly. There will be no peaceful assembly, protest, counter protest and demonstration until a decision is made on January 30, 2020.

Signed: 

**Maude M. Somah**  
**Director of Public Affairs**  
**Ministry of Justice**