



CONGRESS FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE
National Headquarters

OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL SECRETARY GENERAL

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Special Press Release

**Congress for Democratic Change Reacts to Global Witness Revelations
of Bribery and Corruption in the Liberian Government**

MONROVIA, MAY 18, 2016: The Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) is shocked, but not surprised, about the contents of the Global Witness Report released last week. The damaging allegations contained in this report once again point to the long standing view that the Unity Party Government is rampantly corrupt and does not care about the common people. These destructive revelations require an independent, non-partisan, and comprehensive investigation because they paint our country's reputation as a rogue state, literally. Our suffering masses cannot afford to be the subject of such international ridicule.

While we welcome the appointment of an investigative panel, the CDC holds the strong view that such investigative panel be headed by an independent person, someone with no official attachment to the Government of Liberia nor its principal officers and institutions. This task force should also include representatives from the civil society and the International Community to ensure its viability, independence, and objectivity. We take this position because these grave charges involve individuals who are responsible for the administration of the state, and the credibility of a panel comprised only of government employees, could be materially undermined.

The National Executive Committee of the CDC praises the undebatable work of integrity of the international anti-exploitation organization, **Global Witness**, for breaking a vicious cycle of alarming corruption among top officials of the Liberian government through its findings entitled: "The Deceivers" which was published last week on its official website at <https://www.globalwitness.org/thedeceivers/>.

The leadership of the CDC expresses grave concerns over the unrestrained looting of the public wealth under the government of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, whose irresistible impulse to exploit its own citizens knows no bounds. This wanton culture of impunity habituated by these merciless bureaucrats of mis-governance does not only present a clear and present danger to our national pillars of integrity, but dangerously depicts the commission of an 'Organized crime' so scandalous that it constructs an immediate national impediment to the collective moral conscience.

The CDC condemns and vehemently rejects the appointment of Mr. Jonathan Fonati Koffa, who was disbarred in North Carolina from practicing law in 2004. The CDC strongly believes that Mr. Koffa lacks the moral rectitude to investigate this case. The Party believes that as a registered convicted felon within the US Justice system, Mr. Koffa does not have the integrity and credibility to effectively carry out the investigation of this case. Furthermore, with his known

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criminal record, having pled guilty to “four federal charges related to the suspected embezzlement of \$500,000” it behoves us to emphasize that he will not be able to honestly execute this assignment and thus compromises the investigation.

CDC notes that time and time again, the President of Liberia has boasted of and taken credit for creating accountability and anti-corruption institutions like the General Auditing Commission, Liberian Anti-Corruption Commission, Public Procurement and Concessions Commission and Bureau of Concessions, amongst others. CDC notes that the same President has sidelined these institutional arrangements and set up multiple special presidential committees to investigate high profile corruption, leaving Liberians to wonder what are the purposes of these integrity and accountability institutions.

International partners like the American Government and the European Union and its member states have spent millions supporting the setup, training and management of these institutions as a way for Liberians to focus on institutional processes to solve problems. However, the recent announcement by the President of a special committee to investigate, yet again, another Global Witness report on alleged high level trans-national official corruption, clearly and convincingly shows that the President has no faith in these domestic institutions that she has boasted creating with Liberians and international taxpayers’ money. CDC calls on the American Government, the European Union, and other international partners to continue their support to these institutions even if the current President has no faith in them, as building human and institutional capacity is vitally important for the Liberian people. They can be assured that a CDC led Government will fully utilize these institutions to end corruption and impunity in Liberia.

Because of the lack of faith in these institutions by the very president who claimed to have created them, CDC supports the need for the appointment of an independent committee with membership drawn from different segments of the Liberian society. CDC wishes to quickly send a message that culprits’ resignation and prosecution for said heinous crimes, is an inexcusable act of moral and legal necessity that will not be compromised, irrespective of status or sphere of influence.

The President of Liberia has from time to time asked the international community, in particular the United States of America and the European Union, to come and provide professional support in various investigations because she wanted to show independence. Recently, the President informed the Liberian people that she asked the American government to assist with pathologists to investigate the late Harry Greaves’ death; a precedent has been set for requesting outside support.

CDC believes, given the gravity of this corruption allegation, that the President and the Legislature jointly request the **Comptroller General of the United States**, the **President of the European Court of Auditors**, and the **U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigations** through the United States Government and the European Union to provide support to the independent committee to investigate this matter.

Such an independent committee is necessary and a MUST in this instance, given the history of so-called special presidential committees. This independence is particularly critical considering the fact that Liberians and the international community want to know nothing but the truth about the Global Witness allegations including who are “Big Boy 01” and “Big Boy 02.” CDC believes another presidential committee headed by a Presidential appointed Cabinet Member and whose investigation includes members of the President’s Cabinet (including a former official who served as a Cabinet Minister in the President’s office) could undermine the perception and actual independence as well as cast doubt on the entire investigation. The Global Witness report has cast



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yet a wider shame on the Liberian nation and so must be handled with the utmost vigilance, fairness, and with the supreme interest of the Liberian people being the only consideration.

CDC takes note of the never ending special committees usually set up by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, with each report been thrown in the dustbin of history. For instance, Dunn Commission Report on the 'Knuckle Gate Email scandal', Tiawon Gongloe Special Presidential Committee Report on Student-Police Standoff, and Global Witness report on the carbon credit scandal in which President Sirleaf set up the Negbalee Warner Committee. These are just three of the more than 10 examples of Special Presidential Committees' Reports whose findings were never implemented.

The CDC believes the President's setting up of an independent Committee with inherent membership drawn from among credible civil society organizations, religious groupings, prominent senior citizens, and the Liberian Bar Association, with credible **international assistance**, would accelerate the immediate priority and underscore the ultimate urgency of overcoming this deplorable challenge to our moral psyche.

Therefore, mandated to ensure that the interests, the rule of law, the security and moral expectations of the Liberian people are met, the National Executive Committee of the CDC has set up a thirteen (13) member Anti-Corruption Advocacy Committee (ACAC) to coordinate with domestic and international actors and organizations for independent investigations, swift prosecutions, and recovery of stolen assets and illicit wealth. The ACAC members include:

1. Janga A. Kowo, Chairman
2. Jefferson T. Koijee, Deputy Chairman
3. Mulbah K. Morlu, Secretary General
4. Garbla V. Williams, Ex-officio Member
5. Edward Wawoe, Member
6. Cllr. Sayma Syrenius Cephus, Member
7. Cllr. Dempster Browne, Member
8. Isaac Vah Tukpah, Jr., Member
9. Ronald Mendscole, Member
10. Famatta Rosler, Member
11. Barsee Kar-Barley, Member
12. Meminah Carr, Member
13. Henrique Wilson - Member

Undoubtedly, the high level official corruption in the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf led government is the greatest danger posed to Liberia's fledgling democracy and it has been the principal reason why our country continues to lack even the most basic necessities of life; is ranked at the bottom of the

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Wall Street Journal/Heritage Foundation's Economic Freedom Index and the UNDP Human Development Index; and is listed as the third poorest nation on planet earth. It is quite understandable why Transparency International Corruption Barometer ranked Liberia as the Most Corrupt Nation. Without a collective effort to hold corrupt officials accountable, have them prosecuted, and recover stolen wealth, our nation will never progress.

While CDC believes the 2017 election is a critical turning point for Liberia, CDC equally believes unless we are forceful in and committed to standing up against corruption, our nation that is already in a state of economic collapse because of financial indiscipline, will continue to deteriorate and the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf government will leave this nation penniless, broke, financially entrapped, debt overburdened, and bankrupt. Therefore, the CDC emphatically demands the recall of the appointment of Jonathan Fonati Koffa and the immediate commissioning of a truly independent investigation committee.

The high level official corruption has stifled development and put our democracy at risk, presenting a clear and present national danger.

Signed:

Janga A. Kowo,
National Secretary General
On Behalf of the CDC National Executive Committee