

Chapter Five



Human Rights Abuses during the Rice Riots and Doe Era

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RICE RIOTS AND AFTERMATH: 1979-1980¹

During the 1979 Rice Riots, state actors perpetrated human rights violations against civilians as they attempted to quell the instability. Government security forces reportedly perpetrated abuses such as killings, torture, and arbitrary detention of civilians. In addition, there were reports of Liberian forces taking part in looting alongside rioters.¹ Guinean soldiers were also responsible for perpetrating violence.² By the end of the riots, it is estimated that hundreds were killed and injured.³

Several statements recount the shootings of civilians that took place during the Rice Riots, many of which resulted in injuries and deaths. One statement giver reported that the army fired a bullet that hit his 12-year-old son in the mouth and became lodged in the back of his neck.⁴ Another statement giver,

“Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.” *Art. 6(1), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. No derogations from this article are permitted, even in times of public emergency. *Art. 4(1)-(2), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.

who was a teenager at the time of the riots, recalled that a younger friend of his, known as the “marble champ” for his game skills, was killed while looting the Center Supermarket on 12th Street in Monrovia.⁵ Another statement giver witnessed soldiers firing machine guns and people running.⁶ He heard stories about people being killed in their backyards by bullets falling to earth after soldiers randomly shot into the air.⁷

Some statements suggest, however, that not all soldiers were willing to use lethal violence against civilians.

One statement giver reported that, while some soldiers fired to hit the looters, others tried to disperse the looters by firing their weapons in the air or at the ground.⁸ Another statement giver described how soldiers were reluctant to shoot at civilians who were trying to reach the Executive Mansion.⁹ Although no statements articulated a specific reason for this hesitance to shoot, at least one statement giver reflected on the riots’ ethnic undercurrent.¹⁰ He observed that President Tolbert, an Americo-Liberian, ordered the mostly indigenous Liberian

1 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC) is charged with “investigating gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law as well as abuses that occurred, including massacres, sexual violations, murder, extra-judicial killings and economic crimes, such as the exploitation of natural or public resources to perpetuate armed conflicts, during the period January 1979 to October 14, 2003...” An Act to Establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia art. IV, § (4)(a), (enacted by the National Transitional Legislative Assembly, May 12, 2005), <https://www.trcofliberia.org/about/trc-mandate>.

Accordingly, this chapter and the following three chapters describe violations as recounted by TRC statement givers, public hearing witnesses, and other Liberians in the diaspora. The Advocates for Human Rights (The Advocates) has not investigated or corroborated any of these accounts. The Advocates has no reason to doubt the truth of any statement provided to the TRC. Nevertheless, the events described reflect a mix of statement givers’ opinions, actual personal experiences, as remembered or perceived many years later, as well as the perceptions of statement givers about events around them. All of these types of information have value in the national healing process. Where possible, these chapters distinguish between these types of information and supplement the information from statements with information from secondary sources.

military to shoot the mostly indigenous protesters.¹¹ The statement giver witnessed soldiers refusing to shoot the protesters, who were indigenous Liberians like them.¹² Eventually, the senior military officers pointed their guns at the soldiers' backs, forcing them to shoot into the crowd.¹³ Like the senior military officials, however, other forces were prepared to carry out the shooting. When the military refused to use force, the statement giver reported, the police stepped in.¹⁴

In addition to gunfire, soldiers and police used other forms of violence against people who disobeyed the 7:00 p.m. curfew.¹⁵ A statement giver witnessed soldiers employ methods such as forcing people to “pump tire,”¹⁶ “swim” on the cement or in dirty puddles, or squat repeatedly for hours.¹⁷ He also reported seeing soldiers use threats of arrest to force women to have sex with them.¹⁸

In the aftermath of the riots, Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL) leaders and members were arrested and detained.¹⁹ One public hearing witness described the government posting a “Wanted Dead or Alive” poster offering a \$5000 reward for the PAL leaders, one of whom was her brother.²⁰ Working in the government at the time, she described being asked about her brother's whereabouts and later, when her brother was found and taken into detention, being called into Tolbert's office.

After her brother's arrest, her father went to Tolbert to demand his son's release.²¹ Tolbert's former defense minister also recalled that the grandmother of PAL Chairman Baccus Matthews “importuned” Tolbert to release the PAL leaders.²² Ultimately, Tolbert released the leaders of the demonstration.

Torture is defined as “any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.” *Art. 1(1), Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.*

“Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law.” *Art. 9(1), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.*

After the Rice Riots, a commission was established to investigate the causes of the unrest. The Presidential Commission on National Reconstruction issued a report to the government, which drew attention to a submission by citizens that identified socio-economic disparities as the cause of the tension. The report cited the fundamental causes as the following:

They are in a real sense a culmination of more than one hundred years of a national leadership that appears to have eroded its constituents' participation in a meaningful way. The surfacing of these problems which the events of April 14 occasioned could nevertheless be viewed as a consequence of the continuing decline of the quality of the social mores and principles provided for in our constitution.²³

Through the next year, unrest continued in Monrovia. In January, PAL became a registered political opposition party called the Progressive People's Party (PPP).²⁴ At the beginning of March 1980, the PPP led a midnight march on the executive mansion and a few days later called for the resignation of the Tolbert government.²⁵ By March 28, 1980, the Tolbert government had banned the PPP.²⁶

As a result of the Rice Riots, the government's credibility and stability diminished.²⁷ These conditions, combined with the deteriorating economic conditions, widespread popular frustration, and negative public views of the government contributed to the climate of civil unrest. Many statement givers identified the Rice Riots as an influential factor in the events leading to the 1980 coup.²⁸

"Everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others... No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those which are prescribed by law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions on members of the armed forces and of the police in their exercise of this right." *Art. 22(1)-(2), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.*

SAMUEL K. DOE ERA: 1980-1989

Life in Liberia under the regime of Samuel K. Doe and the human rights violations that were perpetrated by his government reflect a pattern of oppression seen in many military dictatorships. Both during the period of military rule and after Doe assumed the civilian presidency, his regime was characterized by ruthless suppression of any perceived threat to his power. The perceived threats to Doe's power encompassed an ever widening circle of Liberians. Doe's methods of governance in Liberia helped set the stage for the violent civil wars that later engulfed the country. Based on information from TRC statements, public hearings witnesses, and secondary sources, this section describes life under the Doe regime for the different groups in Liberian society, including both high-level officials and ordinary Liberians.

The Coup

The first targets of the People's Redemption Council (PRC) were members of the former regime, including the families of those serving in the government. The then-serving president, William Tolbert,

Human rights violations reported during the Doe era:

Summary executions
Enforced disappearances
Unlawful detentions
Violations of rights related to the administration of justice
Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
Violation of the right to take part in the government
Violation of the right of equal access to public service
Discrimination
Violation of freedom of expression
Violation of the right of peaceful assembly and association
Arbitrary interference with privacy, family life, and correspondence
Violation of the right to property and the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of property

was brutally murdered inside the presidential residence. His wife, Victoria Tolbert, described being awakened by the sound of gunfire on the night of April 11-12, 1980. Upon opening the door, she saw two bodies covered in blood on the floor, one of whom she recognized as their guard.²⁹ Soldiers later forced their way into Mrs. Tolbert's bedroom and threatened to kill her and the President: "If you no be Vai woman, we kill you tonight. Right now, right now," one of them proclaimed as he pressed his gun even more firmly into my flesh. "But we no kill Vai woman. We kill president!" shouted the other.³⁰

Mrs. Tolbert reported that she was in the room when her husband was murdered, and she described the scene this way:

Then...six virtually naked and horrifyingly masked men rushed by me. Their bodies were painted for war, in tribal fashion – like the warriors of Cape Palmas during Liberia's tribal wars. Only jagged and weathered scraps of fabric hung securely about their loins. I could see that their gruesome masks, designed to terrify, disguise and intimidate, were painted on...I didn't recognize any of those men...Suddenly, a deafening explosion blasted our ears. One of them had shot [President Tolbert]. He sank to the chair, his walking stick dropped to the floor, and I knew he was dead.³¹

Twenty-seven other government officials were reportedly killed during the coup.³² After the PRC took power, Liberians associated with the President or with other government leaders were hunted. President Tolbert's daughter, Wilhelmina Holder, described hiding with her mother-in-law's neighbor:

The soldiers came in the house and were knocking over chairs and screaming, "If we find Wilhelmina Holder and Burleigh Holder, we'll skin them alive and bury them." And my heart – I mean, I can feel it now – those people, they came to my door and I took my glasses off and I said my last

prayer, gave myself to God, because I said – well, at that time I didn't know whether – I knew my father was dead. I didn't know what had happened to my mother, I didn't know where my husband was, I didn't know where my – none of my sisters were. I knew my brother was maybe in hiding and maybe dead, and I just knew my children were dead. So I was ready to die, took my glasses off, put it down, said my last prayer and presented – gave my whole life and self to God.³³

“Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.” *Art. 6(1), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.*

Members of Tolbert's government were systematically rounded up. One statement giver, whose father had been a political leader and senator,³⁴ described her family's fear of persecution after the 1980 coup:

We stayed at home, scared that we would be killed. I recall that Doe's people were out killing anyone, for any reason or no reason. If Doe or his people knew you were part of a political or governmental group that didn't support Doe, his people would kill you. If they couldn't get to you, they would kill a close family member or someone else you knew.³⁵

The Minister of Defense under President Tolbert, Burleigh Holder, was one of the ministers arrested after the coup and slated for execution. Holder was imprisoned first at the Barclay Training Center where he was beaten in the middle of the night by former members of his staff. He recounted his experience:

[T]hese men pushed me to the ground, commanded me to lie on my stomach, and the three of them beat me simultaneously until I passed out. I counted eighty-seven triple lashes before I fainted...[W]hen I regained consciousness, they had stopped beating me and were wondering whether I was alive or dead.³⁶

Holder, who was jailed for ten months, during part of which he was in the notorious Belle Yallah Prison, recounted the treatment he experienced just after the coup:

Within a few days of my imprisonment, sixteen of us, prisoners, were called out to dig holes in the grounds of the prison. I was told to dig a hole ten by ten feet...we were handed a shovel each...rifles began firing all around me so close to my body that sand was thrown up onto [me]...By this time a crowd of at least four to five thousand people had gathered in the open field

around, all derisively gazing at the spectacle...I was ordered to strip buck naked while digging...a soldier advanced to the partial dugout and emptied a potty of human feces into it, and he ordered me to eat it...Each mouthful was mixed with sand, and I was forced to swallow it.³⁷

Several former government officials were tried by a special military tribunal set up by the PRC. This tribunal recommended death sentences for four of the former government officials.³⁸ On April 20, 1980, however, 13 former government officials were taken to a beach in Monrovia, stripped naked, and executed by firing squad. One statement giver witnessed Doe's men tie the 13 government officials to poles and heard Doe himself give the order to his men to start firing.³⁹

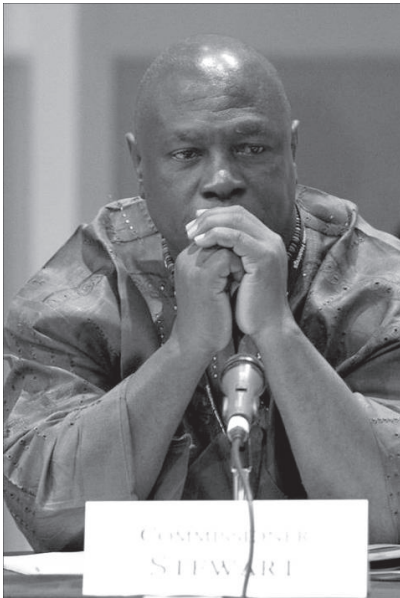
"All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person."
Art. 10(1), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) later reported: "Journalists who had been taken to the barracks to watch the executions said they were cruel and messy. They said four men were forced to watch the others die before being shot themselves as there were only nine stakes."⁴⁰ A statement giver who now lives in the Washington, DC area described his memories of the executions:

I stayed there and witnessed the execution and it was very disgusting. Most of the victims died before they were shot. They must [have had] a heart attack because they had fainted before they were shot. I saw that Richard Henries⁴¹ and Frank Tolbert⁴² had passed out. The soldiers fired indiscriminately, hitting the officials in the stomach or head. Each official got fifty or sixty rounds of bullets in their body. Cecil Dennis⁴³ was the only one alive after the barrage of gun fire; he had not been shot at all. At this point, two soldiers with the firing squad started shooting him and killed him.⁴⁴

"[S]entence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes in accordance with the law in force at the time of the commission of the crime and not contrary to the provisions of the present Covenant and to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. This penalty can only be carried out pursuant to a final judgement [sic] rendered by a competent court." *Art. 6(2), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.*

"Capital punishment may only be carried out pursuant to a final judgement [sic] rendered by a competent court after legal process which gives all possible safeguards to ensure a fair trial, at least equal to those contained in article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, including the right of anyone suspected of or charged with a crime for which capital punishment may be imposed to adequate legal assistance at all stages of the proceedings." ¶ 5, *Safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty.*



Thousands of Monrovia's cheered as the executions proceeded.⁴⁵ One witness stated that, although horrified at what he had seen, he was afraid not to cheer along with the rest of the crowd because he did not want anyone to question his loyalty.⁴⁶

The PRC imprisoned almost all of Tolbert's family members and many other perceived opponents. Victoria Tolbert, the murdered president's wife, was imprisoned for one month. According to testimony from Mrs. Tolbert's daughter, "She was on the bare floor, she didn't have even a piece of cloth to sleep on for over two weeks before one of the soldiers was merciful and brought her a mattress."⁴⁷ President Tolbert's son, A.B. Tolbert, was imprisoned in the Post Stockade and was summarily executed.⁴⁸ All but one of President Tolbert's daughters were placed under house arrest and separated from their children with no knowledge of the children's whereabouts or the whereabouts of their other family members.⁴⁹ According to Wilhelmina Holder,

Some family members came and brought us food and they were arrested then. And Chea Cheapoo⁵⁰ called on his walkie-talkie and before long some of the PRC – and George Boley,⁵¹ he came too, to look at us. And they put us in a room and told us that they had to think about what to do for us, what would be our fate. And we were terrified because they could have killed every one of us. And during the six weeks we were under house arrest, all hours of the night people would come knocking at the door just to gloat at us.⁵²

Another statement giver now living in Washington, DC summarized the situation after the 1980 coup:

[O]ne of [Doe]'s first acts was purging Liberian society of what he considered to be Tolbert supporters. During this time, my friend M. was thrown in prison for political activities. He spent three months in prison with no trial. During this time, he was so underfed that he reached the point of starvation. When I saw him after the ordeal, M. looked like a Holocaust survivor. During this period, men were routinely tortured, beaten and stripped of their positions in the government due to their name, tribal affiliation or association with the former government.⁵³

In the days immediately following the coup, Liberians in Monrovia and Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL)

soldiers reportedly engaged in looting and random killings. According to one estimate, approximately 200 people were killed in just three days.⁵⁴ One statement giver described his experience on April 12, 1980:

We came close to getting killed. We as Liberians had never experienced a coup before and my friend argued with the soldier that we were just going to the airport. The soldier was intoxicated and trigger happy and willing to shoot my friend in the head if he had continued arguing. The soldier put the gun to my friend's head and cocked it to shoot.⁵⁵

Liberians, particularly those of Americo-Liberian descent, lived in a climate of fear. Those who had initiated the coup and taken control of the government were primarily of indigenous African descent. A statement giver now living in the United Kingdom also described her memories of the time just after the coup:

"Each State Party shall take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture...No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture." *Art. 2(1)-(2), Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.*

I remember being absolutely terrified during this time. There were frequent radio announcements that the Krahnns were coming after Americo-Liberians and I did not know what was going to happen from one day to the next and was afraid to walk in certain parts of town. People of Americo-Liberian descent could be identified from their name (the name is often westernized) and the way they spoke. As time went on...Doe's stance against Americo-Liberians became less severe. However, the Americo-Liberians had been subjected to terrible violence, including execution, torture, imprisonment and being taken from their homes in the middle of the night.⁵⁶

"Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person." *Art. 9(1), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.*

Military Rule Under the People's Redemption Council

After the coup, the PRC quickly set up a system of military rule to impose its authority. Executive orders were one mechanism used to control the population and stifle opposition. According to one Liberian historian:

Here, [Doe] was ruling by decrees. There was one decree that prohibited workers from striking. There was another law that made it impossible for schools and other institutions of higher learning [to have] student governments. But not only that, it was the famous Decree 88A, which allowed for anyone that was suspected of criticizing Doe's government to be arrested and sent to jail with no justice.⁵⁷

Statement givers also reported hiring practices that favored ethnic Krahn in appointments and promotions, regardless of ability.⁵⁸

Despite the curtailment of civil and political rights, life returned to some degree of normalcy after the immediate post-coup violence subsided. One statement giver noted that "life was going on as normal at that time; people were just more careful about what they said."⁵⁹ Although the constitution had been suspended,⁶⁰ the PRC claimed that they would soon return the country to civilian rule.⁶¹ Also, the Doe regime was not entirely purged of former employees and Americo-Liberians. One historian notes that:

All persons have the right to enjoy "just and favourable conditions of work which ensure...[e]qual opportunity for everyone to be promoted in his employment to an appropriate higher level, subject to no considerations other than those of seniority and competence." *Art. 7(c), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.*

[Despite] the fact that he had executed their colleagues, Doe's first cabinet included four ministers from Tolbert's era, and others from that era were promoted into the top ranks of the civil services. Of twenty-two cabinet ministers listed in 1985, at least half had held bureaucratic positions in pre-Doe governments. Many were "pure" Americo-Liberian descendants of settler families...⁶²

Nevertheless, for ordinary Liberians, life under the PRC military regime was often filled with fear. A Bassa statement giver who had grown up in Monrovia described it this way:

Doe proceeded to take the law into his own hands, effecting murders and rapes with impunity. Everyone was frightened;...If a man were walking with his wife or daughter on the street, Doe's men or others would simply take the woman and rape her. I personally witnessed such an event one day in the vicinity of the radio station. When I saw three soldiers take a woman into a building, I ran to find their commander; but by the time the commander arrived the woman, presumably raped by all three, simply sat weeping on the ground. Only one of the perpetrators was detained, and the next day he was

released.⁶³

Checkpoints and Curfews

Soldiers often terrorized civilians at checkpoints and after curfew. One statement giver who was a young woman at the time told the TRC that “the environment was very threatening in...Monrovia. Everywhere one went there were soldiers with guns; it was a military government with a six o’clock curfew. No one was crazy enough to break curfew. At 5:30 p.m., people would come home because no one dared to break it.”⁶⁴

“States should condemn violence against women...[r]efrain from engaging in violence against women...[e]xercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons” Art. 4, *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*.

Women were often raped at checkpoint[s]. Individuals were forced to strip and walk home naked. Many men were made to “pump tire,” an exercise where an individual holds his ears and moves up and down balanced on the balls of your feet. Others were made to “fall like a palm tree,” flat to the ground without supporting themselves...[T]he soldiers inflicted these tortures on the people simply to amuse themselves.⁶⁵

Arrests and Unlawful Detentions



Throughout the Doe regime, detainees were held in various locations including Belle Yallah prison,⁶⁶ the Central Police Station,⁶⁷ Post Stockade military prison,⁶⁸ Barclay Training Center,⁶⁹ the Executive Mansion,⁷⁰ unidentified cells, and in some cases, their own homes.⁷¹ Statement givers reported periods of detention ranging from a few days to months at a time. Conditions of detention were abysmal in most cases: overcrowding, little or no sanitation, and generally no medical treatment.⁷² Prisoners were routinely flogged with rattan switches, pieces of steel belt radial tire, or other items while in detention.⁷³ One public hearing witness described the conditions in the Post Stockade as “terrible and almost uninhabitable.”⁷⁴ Individual cells were often overcrowded with poor sanitation. Verbal and physical abuse, harassment, and intimidations to extort money from prisoners were the norm.⁷⁵

The Doe regime also was characterized by periodic purges of any perceived opposition. The killing of Thomas Weh Syen, Doe’s PRC

vice-chair, was the first high-profile purge. In August 1981, Weh Syen and four other high-ranking PRC officials were arrested and accused of plotting to overthrow Doe.⁷⁶ The accused plotters were tried by the Supreme Military Tribunal that had been established to try former Tolbert government officials. According to reports, the proceedings were conducted in secret.⁷⁷ The five accused were found guilty on August 13, 1981, and executed the next day.⁷⁸ A public hearings witness now living in North Carolina was liaison between the prison where Weh Syen was being held and the PRC's Special Security Service (SSS). He reported that Weh Syen asked him to take a message claiming that he was innocent to Doe.⁷⁹ This statement giver was present at the prison when Weh Syen and the other four co-conspirators were executed the next day. He described the scene:

Colonel B. ordered the jailor to release...Major General Thomas Weh Syen and his four co-conspirators. It immediately became apparent to Weh Syen and his co-conspirator that they were about to face their fate... Suddenly Weh Syen and his co-detainees each broke into loud cries and hollering in English saying: "My people, they coming to kill us, oh! Doe is killing us, oh!" They were repeating their cries in the various vernacular[s] continuously as the special squad was ordering them to shut up and line up...The most unbearable moment came when the squad leader ordered his men to shoot. The condemned prisoners began to cry even louder but only to be silenced forever by the barrage of bullets when Weh Syen and his co-conspirators were savagely and unceremoniously gunned down without being blindfolded or even administered some spiritual right...I stood there helplessly, in total disbelief that I had just witnessed the murder of another human being. I can still picture the scene like it is just happening. It is a memory that I will take to my grave. As if it was not enough to watch the gruesome murder of fellow Liberians without due process, I was even more heartbroken when the PRC government announced the same day that Weh Syen and his co-prisoners were killed as they were escaping through the attic of the post stockade. Not only did the Doe government murder fellow citizens in cold blood, but they shamelessly lied to the Liberian people without any remorse.⁸⁰

"All persons shall be equal before the courts and tribunals. In the determination of any criminal charge against him, or of his rights and obligations in a suit at law, everyone shall be entitled to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law." *Art. 14(1), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. "Anyone sentenced to death shall have the right to appeal to a court of higher jurisdiction, and steps should be taken to ensure that such appeals shall become mandatory." ¶ 6, *Safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty*. "Where capital punishment occurs, it shall be carried out so as to inflict the minimum possible suffering." ¶ 9, *Safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty*.

In 1984, this statement giver himself was accused of plotting to overthrow the Doe government.⁸¹ He was arrested and detained for more than two months, then released without explanation.⁸² After his release, however, he was unable to find any work.⁸³

Academic Repression

The military regime particularly targeted students, professors, and other intellectuals. In 1982, the PRC issued Decree 2A, which made it a capital offense to engage in academic activities that “directly or indirectly impinge, interfere with or cast aspersion upon the activities, programmes, or policies of the government of the PRC.”⁸⁴ The decree also banned the formation of student organizations or parties.⁸⁵ The PRC arrested and tortured university administrators and professors.⁸⁶ During the early 1980s the Doe government infiltrated student organizations and harassed those it felt were fomenting opposition. One former University of Liberia student told the TRC:

“Everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others...No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those which are prescribed by law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.” *Art. 22(1)-(2), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.* “Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.” *Art. 19(1), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.*

[T]here was a lot of government infiltration in student organizations. Often times, the infiltrators stood out because they would try to jump into other people’s conversations and ask questions that were obviously designed to gain information...[S]ometimes identifying an infiltrator was as easy as asking them where their next class was, because the infiltrators would not be aware of the building abbreviations typically used by students...⁸⁷

The conflict between academics and the Doe regime climaxed in the summer of 1984. According to one statement giver now living in Minnesota, tensions between the government and the university community had been on the rise:

In 1984, I and other students published a story in the newspaper about President Doe stealing money from the national treasury for personal use. We had been informed by a person at the treasury who did not want to report it himself because of fear of the consequences. After the story was published in the newspapers, government soldiers demanded to know the source and

we students refused to give the name. Government soldiers arrested me and sixteen other students, and detained us at Belle Yallah Prison. The prison was only accessible by plane, as there was no road. Eight of the students were killed, and eight survived. The entire student population was in an outcry, demanding our release.⁸⁸

Doe had appointed Amos Sawyer to lead the national constitutional commission a few years earlier, but by 1984 Doe saw him as a threat.⁸⁹ In August 1984, the PRC arrested Sawyer and George Kieh, professors at the University of Liberia. Students demonstrated to protest the arrests.⁹⁰ One statement giver now living in Minnesota told the TRC about participating in a student demonstration against Doe on August 22, 1984.⁹¹ In the middle of the demonstrations, he decided to take a taxi and leave because he became concerned about the level of military presence.⁹²

The PRC responded to the student demonstrations with brutal force. Statement givers told the TRC about what happened when the military began to act against the demonstrators:

The students had created a closed coffin meant to represent the death of President Doe...[T]he military then detained any students the military claimed were associated with the demonstration. These students were brought to a ridge, were shot, and their bodies were pushed off the ridge down to the road. The students' bodies were left there as an example.⁹³

“The right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (*ordre public*), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.” *Art. 21, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.*

Another student, who was on campus that day to take an entrance exam, described the scene at the University of Liberia:

Soldiers entered campus between noon and 1:00 p.m. firing automatic rifles and student leaders convinced students to stay on campus because the student leaders said it was against international law for the military to come on campus. During the chaos, most of the soldiers were speaking French. They were Ivorian Krahn soldiers who had been drafted into the Liberian army. The soldiers beat professors and stripped them naked. I saw a professor I knew running from campus naked and a market woman had to take her wrap and give it to him. The soldiers mistreated girls by beating or raping them. A cousin of mine was beaten. Other girls were held in the

dorms and raped for several days before they were released. I escaped from the campus by jumping over the concrete fence at the back of the cafeteria... soldiers opened fire on those jumping over the fence...⁹⁴

Rapes of female students demonstrating in 1984 were documented by the Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights.⁹⁵ One woman interviewed for that report stated:

I could hear the screaming of the girls in the cafeteria. They must have been doing it on the tables in there. I could hear the soldiers asking them to undress. I could hear them saying "lie down," and "kiss me" and "spread your legs."⁹⁶

Everyone has the right to an education. "[E]ducation shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups..."
Art. 13(1), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

After the August 22nd attack at the University of Liberia, the PRC dismissed the entire administration and faculty and closed the university.⁹⁷ "The day after this incident, students did not return to University. Checkpoints were established in Monrovia, and anyone found in possession of a student identification card was detained."⁹⁸ The university later reopened after President Doe reappointed only certain members of the faculty.⁹⁹

Media Repression

Under the Doe administration, the Liberian media experienced tremendous growth at the same time it faced significant repression. Between 1980 and 1990, more than 30 private newspapers were founded¹⁰⁰ but there was also an increase in repressive measures.¹⁰¹ As one Liberian stated, "The general attitude of the Doe government was to consider the press an enemy."¹⁰² The Doe regime labeled news stories critical of the government "irresponsible" and "lies and misinformation."¹⁰³ Thus, government enforcement of "responsible journalism" became the justification for systematic violations of the right to freedom of expression. The government used a variety of means to oppress and to control the media, including state directives, closures, bans, arrests, intimidation, and violence.

The government issued policies seeking to tighten state control over the media. In September 1981, Minister of Information Colonel Gray D. Allison announced that the government would begin to enforce a new directive "giving the ministry the mandate to edit all releases and announcements by or about [the] Government or its agencies."¹⁰⁴ The 1986 Media Act required state approval for all reporting.¹⁰⁵ Decree 88A essentially made it impossible for the media to hold the government accountable and subjected dissident media to accusations of "hate speech."¹⁰⁶ State control extended to foreign media as well. Early on, the Doe regime issued a directive requiring foreign journalists to

report at the Ministry of Information for proper accreditation and requiring that all press activities be coordinated through the ministry.¹⁰⁷

The Doe government also used temporary bans and permanent closures to punish and to suppress media outlets that criticized the government. For example, the *Daily Observer* was banned approximately five times between 1981 and 1985 for various reasons, such as publishing letters to the editor reacting to a government ban on University of Liberia student leaders,¹⁰⁸ publishing an article criticizing the unsanitary conditions in Monrovia, and giving more coverage to a trade union dispute than to a speech delivered by President Doe. These bans prevented the *Daily Observer* from printing for periods of between one month and well over a year.¹⁰⁹ A memo by one of Doe's advisors condemning a closure resulted in the advisor's suspension from his job.¹¹⁰

"Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice." Art. 19(2), *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.

In addition to closing media outlets, the Doe administration used harassment and arrest to deter journalists from publishing unfavorable stories and to punish those who did. A reporter described how the offices of *The Daily Observer* were burned down, its offices were closed several times, and journalists were whipped.¹¹¹ Another reporter for *The Daily Newspaper* recalled how the government closed down the newspaper on two occasions and jailed six journalists.¹¹² A journalist for *The Daily Observer* described how he was jailed for two weeks in 1988 for investigating the Director of the Criminal Investigation Division, who allegedly accepted bribes in return for not divulging findings of corruption:¹¹³

When I refused to disclose my source, I was jailed. The first jail in which I was held was decent, but after still refusing to divulge my source, I was transferred to a cramped and unsanitary jail where I stayed for three days. I asked to speak with my lawyer but this request was denied. I was permitted to make a telephone call to my boss at *The Daily Observer*. I was returned to the jail where I spent about eight more days. I was finally released...[T]he authorities must have decided that they could not obtain any information from me.¹¹⁴

"Anyone who is deprived of his liberty by arrest or detention shall be entitled to take proceedings before a court, in order that that court may decide without delay on the lawfulness of his detention and order his release if the detention is not lawful." Art. 9(4), *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.

Ethnic Targeting

Doe's revenge against his opponents increasingly focused on people from Nimba County. In 1983, Doe split with AFL Commanding General Thomas Quiwonkpa, a prominent member of the Gio tribe from Nimba County, forcing Quiwonkpa and his supporters out of the country. Some of Quiwonkpa's supporters carried out raids in and around Yekepa, in Nimba County. The 1983 Nimba Raids were, according to historian Stephen Ellis, "the first open sign that the Krahn-Gio ethnic rivalry had spilled over from the barracks into the country itself."¹¹⁵ Commanding a security post in Yekepa at the time was Charles Julu, later to become a general in Doe's AFL. Julu's nephew, now living in the diaspora, told the TRC about his memory of the Nimba Raid:

In 1983, my family, including my auntie...and her husband, Charles Julu, was a target for elimination. During the Nimba Raid...our family's home was stormed. In Area F, a part of Nimba county, fighters came but [my aunt and uncle] were not home...my cousin, opened the door. The fighters were looking for Charles Julu, Sr. but searched and found nothing so they shot [my cousin] in his side. He pretended to be dead. The fighters then came out and beheaded the wash man. We hid in the pantry. My brother was asleep in the sitting room and was killed by gunmen. The fighters left and the family called the police.¹¹⁶

States Parties are to "prohibit and to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, colour, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law" in the enjoyment of the "right to security of person and protection by the State against violence or bodily harm, whether inflicted by government officials or by any individual group or institution." *Art. 5(b), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.*

Statement givers and secondary sources reported Gen. Julu exacting brutal revenge on the residents of Nimba County throughout the latter half of the 1980s.¹¹⁷

The Doe government also began purging those perceived to be aligned with Quiwonkpa. One statement giver recalled that "people were 'picked up' by Doe's men and imprisoned following accusations of treachery. In 1983, a friend of [mine] named Patrick Kennedy disappeared. His wife said that he had been

taken in the middle of the night supposedly because he tried to launch a coup against the Krahn Government."¹¹⁸ His body was never found.¹¹⁹ A statement giver from Nimba County who now lives in Minnesota noted that his father lost his job in the Doe administration after the split between Quiwonkpa and Doe.¹²⁰ Another statement giver from Nimba County, who had been a close associate of Doe's and had in fact been promoted by Doe, found himself under arrest in 1983 for alleged involvement in the coup plot.¹²¹ After spending a year in prison, he was released after being found not

guilty.¹²²

1985 Elections and Coup Attempt

Under domestic and international pressure, Doe had agreed to return Liberia to civilian rule by 1985. Elections were scheduled for October 1985, but the PRC did not lift its ban on political activity until July 1984.¹²³ In the run up to the election, political freedoms were curtailed despite the lifting of the ban. The government detained opposition leaders and banned popular political parties,¹²⁴ leaving only the weaker parties to participate in the elections.¹²⁵ Hefty registration fees further discouraged political parties from participating.¹²⁶

One statement giver opined that Samuel K. Doe “took off his uniform, put on a suit and tie and decided to run.”¹²⁷ Doe’s main opponent, Jackson F. Doe,¹²⁸ was a popular politician from Nimba County. Statement givers reiterated to the TRC what human rights groups have documented regarding the 1985 election results:¹²⁹ that the elections were “unfair,”¹³⁰ “rigged,”¹³¹ that “Doe forced himself into the presidency,”¹³² “declared himself the winner,”¹³³ and “Doe lost the election but stole it anyway.”¹³⁴ Statement givers detailed their belief that Doe and his partisans engaged in ballot stuffing,¹³⁵ burning ballot boxes,¹³⁶ replacing destroyed ballot boxes and ballots with new ones,¹³⁷ and appointing cronies to recount the votes in Doe’s favor.¹³⁸ Those who suggested the boxes were destroyed were arrested and beaten.¹³⁹ One statement giver used the example of Sam Hill as evidence of election fraud that went beyond the presidential ballot. Sam Hill became speaker of the house without appearing on the original ballot or being nominated in the primary.¹⁴⁰ The Lawyers’ Committee for Human Rights described Doe’s vote rigging as “one of the most brazen electoral frauds in recent African history.”¹⁴¹

“Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions:
(a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;
(b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;
(c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.”
Art. 25, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Just after the election, on November 12, 1985, Quiwonkpa returned to Liberia from exile in the United States with the intention to overthrow Samuel K. Doe. Quiwonkpa had fled Liberia for the United States in 1983, after Doe demoted him and accused Quiwonkpa of plotting a coup. Reportedly, Quiwonkpa entered the country from Sierra Leone. Quiwonkpa and his supporters invaded Monrovia and seized the Barclay Training Center and two radio stations. Quiwonkpa’s broadcast promising free and fair elections was met by public elation.¹⁴² Monrovia began celebrating in the streets, singing,

and stripping billboards of Doe.¹⁴³

The public response manifested the anti-Krahn sentiment that Doe's regime had long fomented. Immediately after Quiwonkpa's announcement:

People were jubilant and started to physically and verbally attack their Krahn neighbors. Shop owners were giving out free liquor, people were blowing their horns and giving the rooster sign, the symbol of the Liberian Action Party, the party of politicians Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Jackson Doe... Quiwonkpa was considered the savior who had come to save the Liberian people from Doe and his Krahn people.¹⁴⁴

One statement giver described the atmosphere in Gbarnga, a large city in Bong County about two hours' drive from Monrovia: "things were tense, with mixed feelings of hope and fear. It was quiet in [Gbarnga]; people were just waiting. Quiwonkpa said that where Doe is, there is no escape for him. The rebels seemed to have the country under control. Then three to four hours later, Doe... announced that the coup had failed."¹⁴⁵

Statement givers and secondary sources both report that Doe had advance warning of Quiwonkpa's plans.¹⁴⁶ Doe announced over the radio that he was still leading the government and that Liberians should "remain loyal."¹⁴⁷ Doe supporters quickly recaptured control of the country. Quiwonkpa was killed and his was corpse mutilated and paraded through the streets of Monrovia.¹⁴⁸ It was reported that Doe's soldiers cut off parts of Quiwonkpa's body and consumed it in an act of cannibalism.¹⁴⁹ A statement giver from Nimba County who worked in the National Security Agency at the time recalled that "Monrovia was silent" and that even though he worked in the government, "he was very scared."¹⁵⁰

Post-Election/Coup Repression

The coup attempt by Quiwonkpa led to a renewed cycle of revenge against Doe's enemies.

Anyone could randomly accuse a person of being a part of the coup and it would lead to death. The television stations filmed citizens celebrating the coup attempt and after Doe regained power, all persons who followed Quiwonkpa's orders were killed, including police officers who thought they were just doing their jobs.¹⁵¹

Another statement giver noted:

People who had been videotaped while “jubilating” began to disappear – apparently soldiers would arrive in the middle of the night and take individuals from their homes while the rest of the family slept unaware, and the individuals were never heard from again. V.R., a friend of [mine] was tipped by a young boy about the “disappearances” and apparently knew that he had been observed “jubilating,” and fled to Côte d’Ivoire in 1985.¹⁵²

These reports of targeting those who had celebrated Doe’s overthrow were confirmed by Doe’s then press secretary:

[A]ll those tapes that the radio, television, private, public people...had taken during that eight-hour period, twelve-hour period [when people were celebrating], were brought to the mansion and Doe was playing those tapes, looking at them. That’s how people were arrested...the security attendants that were watching the tapes, they would say, oh, I know that person who is doing that...That’s how most people lost their jobs also.¹⁵³

“Each State Party shall ensure in its legal system that the victim of an act of torture obtains redress and has an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation, including the means for as full rehabilitation as possible. In the event of the death of the victim as a result of an act of torture, his dependants shall be entitled to compensation.” *Art. 14(1), Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.*

After Doe assumed the presidency, he retained virtually all of the decrees and practices that had restrained civil and political rights during the period of military rule. In 1986, however, Doe granted a general amnesty to all those suspected of participating in the 1985 coup. Life continued largely as it had before the 1985 election under Doe’s civilian leadership. Historians have noted that during the latter half of Doe’s regime, between 1987 and 1988, “[a]buse of human rights and rampant corruption [became] characteristic of the regime.”¹⁵⁴ The government continued to detain people who voiced opposition. Many in the political opposition fled the country, if they were not already in prison.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Liberia’s first elected post-war president, was detained by the Doe government on two occasions, shortly after the attempted coup and approximately a year later.¹⁵⁵ She described her experiences in detention to the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, noting that “When you are in jail...you live with the fear that anything can happen to you at any time, by anybody, without any recourse. So many terrible things have happened to so many people, you know they can happen to you.”¹⁵⁶

The human rights violations perpetrated by the PRC military government and by Doe’s civilian

government were another step on Liberia's path to civil war. The culture of brutality and impunity, as well as the increasing ethnic conflict, was a harbinger of the crisis to come.

Notes

- 1 Garswah Blacktom, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 5-6 (June 11, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 2 TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 1444 and 121. The Tolbert government invoked a mutual defense pact with Guinea, leading to the arrival of more than 700 Guinean troops in Monrovia. JEREMY I. LEVITT, *THE EVOLUTION OF DEADLY CONFLICT IN LIBERIA: FROM 'PATERNALTARIANISM' TO STATE COLLAPSE* 196 (2005).
- 3 *Id.*; Liberia: Give Peace a Chance, PBS, http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/rough/2007/05/liberia_give_pelinks.html (last visited Aug. 14, 2008).
- 4 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1303.
- 5 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1351.
- 6 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 823.
- 7 *Id.*
- 8 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1351.
- 9 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1444.
- 10 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 40.
- 11 *Id.* See also LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *LIBERIA: A PROMISE BETRAYED* 13-14 (1986) (writing that "President Tolbert ordered police to open fire on the unarmed demonstrators" but citing no source for the information).
- 12 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 40.
- 13 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1444. Testimony from Tolbert's then Vice President, however, disputes the fact that Tolbert gave orders to shoot protestors. Bishop Bennie D. Warner, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 28 (June 10, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author) (stating that the "President never ordered for anybody to shoot").
- 14 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 40.
- 15 One statement giver reported that many people simply ignored the curfew or thought they would be exempt if they remained on the sidewalk in front of their yards. TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1444.
- 16 *Id.* Pumping tire is where an individual holds his ears while moving up and down on the balls of the feet. TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1731.
- 17 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1444.
- 18 *Id.*
- 19 LEVITT, *supra* note 2, at 196.
- 20 Marie Y. Hayes, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 4 (June 12, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author). Levitt notes that domestic and international pressure was brought to bear on Tolbert to release the leaders of the riots. LEVITT, *supra* note 2, at 196.
- 21 Marie Y. Hayes, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 9-10 (June 12, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 22 M. BURLEIGH HOLDER, *THE HAND OF GOD* 117 (2006).
- 23 Report of the Presidential Comm'n on Nat'l Reconstruction to Dr. William R. Tolbert, Jr., President of Liberia, at 3, June 12, 1979 (on file with author).
- 24 D. ELWOOD DUNN, AMOS J. BEYAN & CARL PATRICK BURROWES, *HISTORICAL DICTIONARY OF LIBERIA* xxxi (2d ed. 2001).
- 25 *Id.*
- 26 *Id.*
- 27 See Peter Dennis, Int'l Center for Transitional Justice, *A Brief History of Liberia* 2, May 2006, <http://www.ictj.org/static/Africa/Liberia/BriefHistory.pdf>.
- 28 See Augustine Toure, Int'l Peace Acad., *The Role of Civil Society in National Reconciliation and Peacebuilding in Liberia* n.58, April 2002, [http://reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/SKAI-7DHLF9/\\$file/IPA_CivilSociety_Liberia_Apr02.pdf?openelement](http://reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/SKAI-7DHLF9/$file/IPA_CivilSociety_Liberia_Apr02.pdf?openelement).
- 29 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 33 (quoting excerpts from VICTORIA A. TOLBERT, *LIFTED UP* (1996), which were submitted as a TRC statement by members of the Tolbert family in the United States).
- 30 *Id.*
- 31 *Id.*
- 32 Leon Dash, *Liberian Soldiers Taunt, Shoot 13 Former Leaders*, WASH. POST, April 23, 1980, at A1.
- 33 Wilhelmina Holder, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 31 (June 13, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).

- 34 The statement giver's father died in 1970 when she was two years old. TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1374.
- 35 *Id.*
- 36 HOLDER, *supra* note 22, at 136.
- 37 *Id.* at 137-38.
- 38 LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 15.
- 39 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 64.
- 40 1980: *Deposed Ministers Executed in Liberia*, BBC NEWS, April 22, 1980, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/april/22/newsid_2525000/2525477.stm.
- 41 Henries was speaker of the Liberian legislature and was an elected representative from Montserrado County. He was also legal counsel for the Firestone Plantations Company and for the True Whig Party. DUNN ET AL., *supra* note 24, at 163.
- 42 Frank Tolbert was a brother of President Tolbert and President Pro-Temp of the Liberian Senate. Immigration & Refugee Bd. of Canada, *Liberia: Number of brothers and sisters of former president William Tolbert, and their names; fate of ministers of his government and their relatives after the 1980 coup*, Oct. 1, 1991, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/type,QUERYRES_PONSE,,LBR,3ae6abfe38,0.html.
- 43 Dennis was President Tolbert's lawyer and legal counsel for the Mesurado Group of Companies, among other prominent individuals and corporations. He was also president of the Board of Directors of the Bank of Liberia and was Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time of the 1980 coup. DUNN ET AL., *supra* note 24, at 106.
- 44 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1444.
- 45 LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 15.
- 46 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 64.
- 47 Wilhelmina Holder, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 34 (June 13, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 48 James Y. Hunder, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 10-11, 19-21 (June 13, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 49 Wilhelmina Holder, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 33 (June 13, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 50 Cheapoo, originally from Grand Gedeh County, was educated as a lawyer in the United States and was appointed as a lawyer in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry when he returned to Liberia. He later served in the Senate but was expelled by the True Whig Party leadership. He was legal advisor to PAL and its political incarnation, the PPP. He was imprisoned on treason charges along with other PPP members and was released after the PRC coup. He was appointed Minister of Justice in the PRC government, but only until 1981. DUNN ET AL., *supra* note 24, at 66.
- 51 Boley, originally from Grand Gedeh County, obtained a bachelor's degree and a PhD in the United States before returning to Liberia, at which time he was appointed Assistant Minister of Education in the Tolbert government. He was later imprisoned on treason charges along with other PPP members and was released after the PRC coup. He was first made Minister for Presidential Affairs in the PRC government, but also held the posts of Minister of Posts and Telecommunications and later Minister of Education. Boley later formed an armed fighting faction, the Liberia Peace Council (LPC), in 1993. DUNN ET AL., *supra* note 24, at 43.
- 52 Wilhelmina Holder, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 33 (June 13, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 53 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1731.
- 54 LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 14.
- 55 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1444.
- 56 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1039
- 57 Dr. Augustine Konneh, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 15 (June 10, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 58 See Chapter 4 for more information about tribalism during the Liberian civil crises.
- 59 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1039.
- 60 LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 15.

- 61 Dash, *supra* note 32 (quoting Samuel K. Doe as saying “The armed forces have taken over the government to recover from their long years of suffering and when things begin to get on the right track, we, the men and women in arms, will return to the barracks where we belong.”).
- 62 WILLIAM RENO, *WARLORD POLITICS AND AFRICAN STATES* 82 (1998).
- 63 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1648.
- 64 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 469.
- 65 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1731.
- 66 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 114.
- 67 *Id.*
- 68 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 124.
- 69 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 114.
- 70 *Id.*
- 71 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 33.
- 72 *See* LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 82-85.
- 73 *Id.*
- 74 James Y. Hunder, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm’n of Liberia 10 (June 13, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 75 *Id.*
- 76 LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 47; *see also* James Y. Hunder, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm’n of Liberia 11 (June 13, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 77 LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 47.
- 78 *Id.*; *see also* DUNN ET AL., *supra* note 24, at 312-13.
- 79 One night Weh Syen asked me if I would do him a favor and if I was brave enough to deliver a message to [Commander in Chief] Doe. I replied that I would. Weh Syen said that he had a message for Samuel Doe: “Tell Doe if he causes my blood to be shed, he’s going to pay in worst manner. I did not wrong him, I did not go against him, and I never planned with anyone to kill him. So if he ends my life, his blood will be shed or worse.”
James Y. Hunder, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm’n of Liberia 12 (June 13, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 80 *Id.* at 13-14.
- 81 *Id.* at 16-17.
- 82 *Id.*
- 83 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1339.
- 84 LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 157.
- 85 *Id.*
- 86 *Id.* at 161 (describing the 1980 detention of J. Teah Tarpah, Vice President for Academic Affairs, the 1981 detention and torture of Patrick Seyon, Vice President for Administration, and the 1984 arrest of Professors Amos Sawyer and George Kieh).
- 87 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 25.
- 88 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 114.
- 89 AMOS SAWYER, *BEYOND PLUNDER* 19-20 (2005).
- 90 LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 161.
- 91 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 25.
- 92 *Id.*
- 93 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1442; *see also* TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1444.
- 94 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1444.
- 95 LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 40-43.
- 96 *Id.* at 41.
- 97 *Id.* at 155.
- 98 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1442.
- 99 LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 155-56.
- 100 *See generally* AYODEJI OLUKOJU, *CULTURE AND CUSTOMS OF LIBERIA* (2006).
- 101 *See generally id.*
- 102 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 901.
- 103 *Liberian Newspaper Banned in Monrovia*, XINHUA GEN. OVERSEAS NEWS SERV., Apr. 7, 1988.
- 104 Momo K. Rogers, *The Liberian Press under Military Rule*, 21 *LIBERIAN STUDIES J.* 1, 7-32 (1996).
- 105 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 904.
- 106 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 901.
- 107 *In brief: Announcement to Foreign Journalists*, BBC NEWS, Apr. 21, 1980.

- 108 Adewale Maja-Pearce, *The Press in West Africa*, 19 INDEX ON CENSORSHIP 6, 44–73 (1990).
- 109 *Id.* In January 1985, the *Daily Observer* was banned by President Doe for providing greater coverage to the trade unions and did not resume publication until late 1986. *Id.*
- 110 Bai Gbala, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm’n of Liberia 57 (June 12, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 111 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 903.
- 112 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 119.
- 113 *Id.*
- 114 *Id.*
- 115 STEPHEN ELLIS, THE MASK OF ANARCHY: THE DESTRUCTION OF LIBERIA AND THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF AN AFRICAN CIVIL WAR 58 (1999).
- 116 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 398.
- 117 *E.g.* TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 1551 and 16; ELLIS, *supra* note 115, at 60.
- 118 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1039.
- 119 *Id.*
- 120 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1598.
- 121 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1641.
- 122 *Id.*
- 123 LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 107.
- 124 *Id.* at 112-13.
- 125 Dr. Augustine Konneh, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm’n of Liberia 16 (June 10, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 126 LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 114.
- 127 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 33.
- 128 Jackson F. Doe was no relation to Samuel K. Doe. Jackson Doe was originally from Nimba County and had served as both an elected representative and senator from Nimba County prior to the 1980 coup. Jackson Doe was detained for four months after the coup but was later released and appointed as an advisor to Samuel Doe on national and international affairs. Jackson Doe ran as a candidate of the Liberia Action Party in the 1985 presidential elections and is widely presumed to have won. DUNN ET AL., *supra* note 24, at 110-11.
- 129 The U.S. Department of State notes that while voting appeared “free and open,” claims of illegalities with regard to the counting of ballots were widespread. U.S. DEP’T OF STATE, COUNTRY REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES FOR 1985: LIBERIA 175 (1986). The Lawyers Committee for Human Rights reported that “[t]he election was judged to have been fraudulent by virtually all independent observers—foreign journalists, western diplomats, international monitoring groups, and both Houses of the U.S. Congress.” LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 18.
- 130 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1293.
- 131 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1351.
- 132 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 23.
- 133 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 786.
- 134 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1613.
- 135 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1293.
- 136 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1592.
- 137 *Id.*
- 138 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 42; *see also* Dr. Augustine Konneh, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm’n of Liberia 17 (June 10, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 139 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1592.
- 140 *Id.*
- 141 LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 118.
- 142 *Id.* at 20.
- 143 *Id.* (citations omitted).
- 144 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1444.
- 145 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 121.
- 146 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1592; ELLIS, *supra* note 115, at 59-60.
- 147 LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 20.
- 148 ADEKEYE ADEBAJO, LIBERIA’S CIVIL WAR: NIGERIA, ECOMOG, AND REGIONAL SECURITY IN WEST AFRICA 29 (2002); ELLIS, *supra* note 115, at 60; LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 58.
- 149 ADEBAJO, *supra* note 148, at 29.

- 150 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1592.
- 151 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1444; *see also* LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 49-50.
- 152 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1351.
- 153 Interview with Patrick Kugmeh, former Presidential Press Secretary to Samuel K. Doe, in Minneapolis, Minn., at 16-17 (Oct. 3, 2008) (transcript on file with author).
- 154 DUNN ET AL. , *supra* note 24, at xxxii.
- 155 LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *supra* note 11, at 103-4.
- 156 *Id.* at 105.

