

October 21, 1991

LIBERIA
The Cycle Of Abuse
Human Rights Violations Since The November Cease-fire

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INTRODUCTION

On November 28, 1990, Liberia's warring factions signed a cease-fire agreement, theoretically ending 11 months of fighting that had ravaged the country.¹ Although the widespread killing and brutality associated with the civil war have largely subsided,² an Africa Watch investigative mission³ found that human rights violations against the civilian population persist, ranging from extrajudicial executions and torture to tight restrictions on freedom of movement and intolerance of dissent. Most of the abuses occur in the 90 percent of the country controlled by Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), but civilians are also victimized by the two other armed factions: Prince Johnson's break-away rebel group, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL); and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), former President Doe's army. The country remains divided among these three armed factions and the ECOMOG peacekeeping force.⁴ Only the interim government led by Amos Sawyer, which governs Monrovia but has no army, has not been responsible for human rights abuses.⁵

Africa Watch's findings include the following:

- o Civilians in NPFL territory, which covers the entire interior of Liberia, minus the capital, no longer face the atrocities of all-out war; nevertheless, they suffer the capricious actions associated with a military occupation -- arbitrary arrest, physical abuse, confiscation and destruction of property and restrictions on freedom of movement and freedom of expression. Underlying these problems is the perception that the NPFL "fighters" are a law unto themselves, and many of these fighters are young,⁶ undisciplined and unpaid. While security in a given area depends largely on the discipline exercised by the local commander, individual fighters have considerable latitude to arrest, detain, extort, threaten and sometimes injure civilians.
- o Prince Johnson and the INPFL remain armed on their base at Caldwell, on the outskirts of Monrovia. They have been responsible for summary executions, arbitrary arrest and physical abuse of civilians in the Caldwell area. Since late July 1991, Johnson has ordered summary executions of at least six and possibly up to nine fighters and civilians. The interim government, lacking any troops, is effectively powerless to exert control over Johnson, since he does not recognize its authority. ECOMOG has avoided using force against Johnson, since it would lead to renewed fighting.

¹The ceasefire was broken within days of the agreement, when Prince Johnson attacked the AFL. Nevertheless, the cease-fire largely held in Monrovia and most of the interior during 1991, except for NPFL military actions in Grand Gedeh and along the Sierra Leone border.

²See also: Africa Watch, *Liberia: Flight From Terror, Testimony of Abuses in Nimba County*, May 1990; and "Liberia: A Human Rights Disaster: Violations of the Laws of War by All Parties to the Conflict," October 26, 1990.

³The mission was conducted in August 1991 by Janet Fleischman, research associate of Africa Watch. She traveled to Liberia, visiting both Monrovia and NPFL-controlled territory, and to refugee areas in the Ivory Coast.

⁴ECOMOG, or the Economic Community Monitoring group, comprises five countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. They entered Liberia as a peace-keeping force on August 24, 1990, but soon took on an offensive role against Charles Taylor's NPFL. The purpose of ECOMOG was to neutralize Taylor's troops, install the interim government and organize free elections.

⁵Even the ECOMOG peacekeeping force was accused of abuses during the war. Concerns about ECOMOG centered on its bombing of heavily populated civilian areas and abuses by its soldiers, including looting and harassment of civilians.

⁶Young fighters are quite common in NPFL territory. Africa Watch saw armed fighters at checkpoints who were no more than 10-12 years old; relief workers who travel around the interior have reported seeing fighters as young as 6.

- o The AFL soldiers remain armed in their base at the Barclay Training Center and at Camp Schiefflin, and are themselves responsible for abuses against civilians in Monrovia, including looting, beating and general harassment of civilians. Civilians are particularly fearful of these soldiers, since the Army was closely associated with Doe's brutal reign.
- o Ethnic conflict, one of the tragic legacies of the Doe regime,⁷ remains a very live issue, particularly in Grand Gedeh county which is populated largely by the Krahn ethnic group. As recently as late July, fighting continued between the NPFL and a Krahn resistance movement. Civilians were subjected to abuses by the NPFL reminiscent of last year's fighting, including indiscriminate killings, targeting of Krahn and Mandingo people, burning of villages and widespread looting. Although difficult to document, human rights violations can also be attributed to the Krahn resistance.
- o The U.S. government has done a complete about-face regarding Liberia: after years of supporting the brutal and corrupt regime of former President Doe, making it the largest recipient of U.S. aid in sub-Saharan Africa, Liberia is now considered virtually irrelevant. The Bush Administration has a special responsibility to work to curtail human rights abuses in Liberia, given the country's long-standing historical ties with the United States and the role played by the U.S. in setting the stage for the current crisis.

Liberia's conflict threatens the stability of the entire West African region. It has already spilled over into neighboring countries in the form of some 750,000 refugees -- a third of Liberia's pre-war population -- who have fled to Guinea, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Ghana, among other countries. Combat has been waged recently on the Sierra Leone border between the NPFL and the Sierra Leone military, which is aided by a Krahn-based Liberian resistance group called ULIMO (the United Liberation Movement of Liberia). Until recently, there was also fighting between the NPFL and Krahn fighters in Grand Gedeh, near the Ivory Coast, whose government is fearful of armed attacks extending to its territory. In several areas, the possibility of a new round of ethnic warfare and brutality remains quite real.

In September 1991, hopes were raised that peace may finally come to Liberia, and that free and fair elections would be allowed to take place. There is a danger, however, that if hopes for peace are allowed to overshadow concerns about human rights, the cycle of abuse will be doomed to repeat itself. Compliance with internationally recognized human rights standards must be an integral part of any eventual peace agreement.

⁷President Doe, an ethnic Krahn, had surrounded himself with members of his own ethnic group, providing economic and educational opportunities for them at the expense of the rest of the population, and permitting Krahn military and police to commit egregious abuses against civilians. Doe's government was particularly hostile toward the Mano and Gio ethnic groups, because of an abortive coup attempt in 1985, led by Thomas Qwiwonkpa, a former general from Nimba county who was a Gio. In the aftermath of the coup attempt, Doe's soldiers engaged in bloody reprisals against real and suspected opponents, targeting mostly Gios and Manos. These events helped set the stage for Taylor's December 1989 attack in Nimba County, and the subsequent brutality of the Liberian army's counterinsurgency campaign, which targeted Gios and Manos.

BACKGROUND TO POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The November cease-fire, signed in Bamako, was an important step in the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) initiative to bring the warring factions to the negotiating table. In Bamako, the 15 African heads of state who make up ECOWAS met with the three sides to the conflict -- the NPFL, the INPFL and the AFL.⁸ Prior to the Bamako meeting, Taylor had refused to participate in peace talks. The Bamako agreement was based on an ECOWAS peace plan that had been worked out by the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee.⁹ The peace plan called negotiating an immediate cease-fire; organizing a meeting of political parties, interest groups and the warring factions to establish a broad-based interim government; and holding of free and fair elections under international supervision. The leaders of the warring factions were excluded from heading the interim government, and the interim president would be ineligible to run for president in the ensuing general elections.

The Bamako summit was followed on December 21 by a meeting in Banjul, the Gambia. At the conclusion of the talks, a joint statement was issued by the three warring parties announcing that an All Liberia Conference would be held within 60 days to form an interim government, at which point "said government take appropriate measures, with the assistance of ECOWAS, to begin disarming the warring parties."

The conference was not organized in the 60-day period, but it was decided at a February 1991 meeting in Lomé, Togo, that the conference would begin in Monrovia on March 15. However, Taylor distanced himself from the Lomé agreement by stating that he did not agree with all aspects of the final communique -- especially the decision to exclude the leaders of the warring groups from becoming interim president, despite the fact that this provision had been part of the November Bamako agreement.

Taylor also did not attend the All Liberia Conference in March 1991, citing fears for his security.¹⁰ An NPFL delegation went to the conference, but walked out a week later. The subsequent election of Amos Sawyer¹¹ as president of the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) at the conclusion of the conference in April was conducted without the participation of the NPFL, which refused to recognize the legitimacy of the IGNU.

A series of meetings have since been held in Yamoussoukro, in the Ivory Coast. The meetings have focused on the question of elections, not only election logistics but also the need to disarm all warring factions and to confine them to their bases. At this writing, three such meetings have taken place in 1991 -- in June, July and September.

On September 17, the most recent Yamoussoukro meeting, Taylor agreed to disarm his troops under the supervision of an expanded peacekeeping force and to confine his fighters ("encamp" them) as part of the

⁸Amos Sawyer was also in Bamako, but the interim government was not a party to the agreement.

⁹In early August, a meeting was held in Banjul at which the peace plan was elaborated. A Standing Mediation committee had been formed earlier in 1991, composed of the heads of state of the Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Togo and Mali.

¹⁰Taylor's security concerns were not wholly unjustified. In September 1990 when former President Doe left his heavily guarded mansion, he was captured and tortured to death by Prince Johnson. Representatives of both the Nigerian and Togolese governments made special trips to Taylor's headquarters in Gbarnga to assure him that they would guarantee his security in Monrovia, but to no avail.

¹¹Sawyer had been chosen to head the first interim government in late August 1990 at a meeting of Liberian groups in Banjul; Taylor did not participate in that meeting for reasons that remain unclear. The interim government was installed in Monrovia in mid-November, just before the Bamako summit.

ongoing peace process. Taylor made his commitment to ECOMOG,¹² provided that the composition of the contingent was changed to add troops from Senegal and reduce the Nigerian contingency. Until then, Nigerians had made up approximately 80 percent of the ECOMOG force, and Taylor has always considered them to be particularly hostile to the NPFL. The entry of Senegal¹³ is also important because the Francophone countries have been more supportive of Taylor. Meanwhile, a committee of West African states has been formed to help organize elections, which are due to take place in six to nine months.

THE NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FRONT OF LIBERIA

The Fighting in Grand Gedeh

In Grand Gedeh county -- the province of former President Doe and his ethnic group, the Krahn -- fighting was continuing between the NPFL and a Krahn resistance movement at least as recently as late July. Although NPFL authorities deny that there has been any fighting, more than 10,000 refugees fled to the area around Tai in the Ivory Coast between mid-July and early August.¹⁴ This latest wave of refugees from Grand Gedeh joined the 24,980 refugees¹⁵ who had already sought refuge in villages around Tai.

By all accounts, Grand Gedeh has been devastated by the fighting. A relief worker who was able to visit Grand Gedeh was stunned by the evidence of destruction and killing.

It's the systematic destruction of Grand Gedeh. Every single town and farm village has been burned. There was no sign of life. Doe's town -- Tuzon -- was not burned, but it was looted. Zwedru was not burned, but there was a lot of looting. Anyone who wants to be president should see that -- retribution for the abuse of power. And many of those people didn't benefit in any way from Doe's government.

I saw very frightened people. A lot of women, children and older men. And bones and skulls around Zwedru. There is no question but that there was a tremendous amount of killing.¹⁶

Testimonies given by the refugees indicate that the fighting in Grand Gedeh bore many of the hallmarks of last year's war, with the civilians terrorized by indiscriminate killings, house-to-house searches for Krahns and Mandingos (who are accused of having collaborated with the Doe regime), burning of villages and widespread looting.

Indiscriminate Killing of Civilians

The refugees, many still traumatized by their escape from Grand Gedeh just hours or days earlier,

¹²Press reports indicate that Prince Johnson has refused to disarm his fighters as long as he is excluded from the peace process.

¹³The Bush administration deserves credit for encouraging Senegal to join ECOMOG. President Bush met with Senegalese President Abdou Diouf in Washington in September and committed the United States to support the Senegalese troops.

¹⁴According to a census carried out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 10,077 new refugees arrived in Tai between July 15 and early August.

¹⁵Figure from Africa Watch interview with Fofana Braihima, Sous Préfet of Tai, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

¹⁶Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 19, 1991.

provided Africa Watch with details of the brutality of the offensive. The principal targets were the Krahn and Mandingo people. According to Obed, a Krahn student who fled on July 19:

The rebels were killing us. They killed my father; they killed three women; they killed my uncle. My father was killed on June 11. It was about 6:30 in the morning. Some rebels came from Harper to Putu, some came from Sino and from Zwedru. They went from village to village, killing whoever they could find. When they got to my village, Tumbo, they started firing and everyone began to run. They grabbed my father and asked if he was a Krahn; when he said 'yes, I'm a Krahn man,' they shot him.

A woman I knew, Betty Pine, ran when the rebels came, and the rebels took her baby. They called to her in the bush and told her to come and get her baby. They shot her as she was coming, then used a cutlass and cut the baby in half.

I was also shot, in my left leg, but hid in the grass.¹⁷

Gbala, a 30-year-old woman, left Grand Gedeh in late July because of the NPFL attack.

In July, we went to harvest the rice. When we got to the fields, we saw rebels with guns around the farm. They started shooting at us. Five people were killed: a woman, Manta Tweh; an old woman, Klay Zor; and three men -- Palu Nyonbior,¹⁸ Josiah Beh and Bestman Sayde. The rest of us ran into the bush and fled to the Ivory Coast.

A Krahn clan chief who arrived in Ivory Coast on June 10 explained why he left Liberia:

The war drove me from my country. The rebels shot my family -- two uncles and a sister -- in the bush. They had no burial; they were just left there.¹⁹

In June, a woman named Betty Kanah called the BBC in London to report on the fighting in Grand Gedeh.

They are killing us in Putu, killing us for nothing; killing innocent people, children, old people, crippled people, young, teachers -- killing the people. And we are suffering down there. We do not know what we did to him [Taylor].²⁰

The NPFL practice of searching for Krahn and Mandingo was discussed by Jackson, a 30-year-old Mandingo who had been recruited by the NPFL after his capture in September 1990.

I was captured by the rebels last September in Kaweaken. I could speak Gola, so I told them I was Gola. If I had told them I was Mandingo, they would have killed me. I said I wanted to join them -- it was the only way to rescue myself.

¹⁷Africa Watch interview in Daobly, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

¹⁸Africa Watch interview in Daobly, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

¹⁹Africa Watch interview in Tai, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

²⁰"Witness Views Taylor-Led Attacks, Libyan Role," BBC World Service, Focus on Africa Program, June 6, 1991. Reprinted in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, June 11, 1991.

When we entered towns, we asked the townspeople for Mandingo, Krahn and remaining forces. We killed the ones we found. In July, we attacked Konobo, and killed about 175 people -- women, children and soldiers.²¹

Arbitrary Detention

In general, the two sides fighting in Grand Gedeh have executed captured combatants rather than taking them as prisoners of war. However, numerous refugees reported that the NPFL has seized civilians, usually women and children.

The following cases were reported to Africa Watch:

- o A 23-year-old Krahn man saw his wife captured on June 12 in John Davis Town. She was eight months pregnant and was unable to run away. She was taken by four armed NPFL fighters, along with several others without arms. A woman named Mamie Paye was also captured.²²
- o An elderly Krahn woman hid in the bush and witnessed the capture of her family -- her daughter, Sarah, and her two children, who were nine months and two years old. According to the woman, the fighters started shooting when they entered the town. Some people were killed as they scattered in an effort to escape.²³
- o A farmer who fled with his family from Zia Town in July saw women and children being taken away. He said that the NPFL arrived at 4:30 a.m. and started shooting and forcing everyone to run for cover. In the confusion, children were left behind, including one of the farmer's sons whose whereabouts are unknown. The NPFL captured some 15 of the women and children, including a pregnant woman, Daganon, and Sarah Kwee with her three children.²⁴

Saye, a 21-year-old Krahn from Zia Town, arrived in Ivory Coast in late July. He explained what happened to him after his capture by the NPFL:

I was sleeping at home, it was about 6:00 a.m. Six rebels wearing the NPFL patch and carrying automatic weapons came: they beat me, tied my hands behind my back and tied my feet, and carried me to their camp. They took my clothes. About 30 minutes later, they loosened the ties and threw cold water on me. I was cold -- I had no clothes on. They left me in a room and they went behind the hut to eat. At around 7:00 p.m., I escaped, because the door wasn't locked. But people aren't usually arrested; they are usually just killed.²⁵

Abuses By the Remaining Krahn Forces

Access to Grand Gedeh is virtually impossible, making it difficult to gather information about abuses

²¹Africa Watch interview in Tai, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

²²Africa Watch interview in Daobly, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

²³Africa Watch interview in Ponan, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

²⁴Africa Watch interview in Ponan, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

²⁵Africa Watch interview in Tai, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

being committed by the remaining Krahn forces. The composition of these forces is not known: many were formerly soldiers in the AFL, but others appear to be civilians who have formed ad hoc civil defense units. They, too, have been accused of serious abuses.

Thomas, 20 years old, fought with the Krahn forces in Grand Gedeh. He told Africa Watch that the Krahn forces rarely took prisoners:

When we caught rebels, they were asked 'why are you still fighting when there is supposed to be a cease-fire.' Then we killed them. We caught about 20 rebel soldiers and killed them. The Captain -- Amos Collins -- only freed those who begged and said that the rebels had forced them to join.²⁶

Betty, the Krahn woman who called the BBC to report on the fighting, also discussed the armed resistance to Taylor:

[The resistance] is not Doe's soldiers. We are Krahn people; we are Krahn people in the village, running away from Charles Taylor's people, and they still follow us in the bushes to kill us.²⁷

When asked whether the NPFL fighters found by the Krahns are killed, she said: "Of course! If you come to kill me, I can surely kill you, too."

Since members of other ethnic groups living in the area are often suspected of being Krahn or Mandingo, some of them have also reportedly taken up arms. A woman interviewed by *The Guardian* in June stated that:

The Sapphos are also victims because they are assumed to be Krahn. So the Sappho fled from their homeland in Sino county and have joined with the Krahn in one battalion based in Putu. They are depending on weapons they have captured from the rebels.

The majority of towns have been burned, even when the people are still inside the houses. Over 100 villages have been burned.²⁸

Arbitrary Arrest and Restrictions on Freedom of Movement

Incidences of arbitrary arrest and restrictions on civilians' movements are particularly evident at checkpoints when civilians attempt to travel to or from NPFL territory: to move between Monrovia and the interior of the country, a special pass must be obtained from the NPFL. Liberians civilians have a particularly difficult time obtaining these passes. Taylor's tight control over movement to or from his territory has led to accusations that he is holding the civilian population hostage.

The interim government in Monrovia does not require Liberians to have passes to enter or leave the capital, so anyone can theoretically come to the city. NPFL authorities permit their fighters to travel freely to Monrovia -- which they often do, although they must come unarmed.

Many civilians attempting to travel to Monrovia complained of beatings, detention and harassment by fighters. Some have been forced to turn back. A 38-year-old man from Cape Mount described what happened the first time he tried to leave NPFL territory:

²⁶Africa Watch interview in Tai, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

²⁷"Witness Views Taylor-Led Attacks, Libyan Role," BBC World Service, Focus on Africa Program, June 6, 1991. Reprinted in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, June 11, 1991.

²⁸Mark Hubband, "Bloodshed goes on for Liberians," *The Guardian*, June 6, 1991.

I was caught and flogged when I said I was going to Monrovia. Two fighters arrested me, beat me and sent me back home. They beat me with rattan [bamboo from the bush] on my back. They seized all my things -- my money, my clothes. I decided to try again, because living conditions are so hard. This time, when the fighters asked me where I was going, I didn't say Monrovia. They charged me \$50 to bring me to another area. They told me to carry three bags of fufu for them -- weighing about 150 lbs.

Anything you have, they say is for Taylor. They always say that your life is not important. They forced my 18-year-old son to join them. You, the father, cannot refuse.²⁹

M., a Liberian professional who had lived in Monrovia since 1956 but was caught behind Taylor lines in the war, managed to get himself and his family to Monrovia in July. He described the abuse that civilians face at the checkpoints and his own efforts to reach Monrovia:

We tried to come after the cease-fire. We paid for a pass in December 1990 from Buchanan. We saw others around Gate 15, between Careysberg and Robertsfield, and we heard all sorts of stories about those who tried to go to Monrovia. People were jailed, brutalized, the roads were not open as we had heard. So we took our things and went home. We didn't try again until March. This time, we got stuck in Kakata. When we got to Firestone, we were warned not to say that we were going to Monrovia, so we said we were going to Kakata. We found a place to stay, not knowing that it would take three-and-a-half months to get to Monrovia. There were 11 of us, all women but me, a small boy and a big boy. I advised the big boy to join others and go by the bush road. He was caught in Mt. Barclay and jailed for one or two nights. Our problem was all the women. In March, when ECOMOG came, many of the women yelled "no more CO" [commandos] and cheered "ECOMOG" -- so the fighters were not letting women go to Monrovia.

Finally, we got laissez-passers -- we had to pay for them -- and a police clearance to get to Danane. We had to pay \$140 per person, plus \$25 for the police clearance, plus \$15 for the laissez-passers....[I]n the bus to the border, we had to pay \$150-\$200 at various checkpoints. For every time someone stamps your papers, you have to pay.

For the fighters, the cease-fire simply means that they are not at war with ECOMOG, the AFL or Johnson. It has no effect on civilians. Even while the cease-fire was in force, fighters would go to the beach when the Kru fishermen came in (the Fanti fishermen were gone). They would say that every fish in the ocean belonged to the CIC [Commander in Chief -- Taylor]. They would say that if you catch three fish, one is for the government, two are for you; if you catch two fish, one is for the government; if you catch one, it's for the government.

For the past two-and-a-half months, things have gotten better. No armed people are supposed to go on the beaches anymore. But at the gates, the fighters still harass people.

When civilians try to go to Monrovia, everything is taken from them. The Gios and Manos are the main ones who can travel, and market women for business. The fighters are the only ones with access to vehicles, because they've commandeered all the cars, so they control all transportation. Sometimes you can pay them to take you, but sometimes they turn you in for "reconnaissance"³⁰ and you are jailed.

²⁹Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 19, 1991.

³⁰It is fairly common for NPFL fighters to charge civilians with "reconnaissance," a blanket charge that means they are suspected of spying on the NPFL, usually in the service of ECOMOG.

There is not much killing anymore, especially not in the urban areas. Mostly they beat people at the gates. Their primary aim is to milk the population. Many of them have realized the evil of what they've done, but still it's a group of people who are not fed, paid or clothed, so they must do it for themselves. People are scared for their lives because of the disorganization that they see. It is serious. One little fighter told my wife, 'we're the ones who let people go through or not.'³¹

Out of desperation, some Liberians attempt to make it to Monrovia on bush roads; others arrange to pay fighters significant sums of money to take them on these roads. Both options present serious risks: without a fighter "escort," civilians run the danger of being caught; with an "escort," there is always a chance that they will be turned in and accused of spying for the "enemy."

The following cases were reported to Africa Watch:

- o In June, a 20-year-old man paid a fighter to take him from Kakata to Monrovia. The fighter turned him in at Mt. Barclay, claiming he had been engaged in "reconnaissance." The young man was jailed for approximately two days before being released because another fighter knew him. He was re-detained almost immediately by the same fighter who had arrested him, but managed to escape with the assistance of a woman fighter.³²
- o A 29-year-old Vai woman who was eight months pregnant left her home in Cape Mount for Monrovia on July 20. She traveled with about 15 people -- two children, between 10 and 12 years old, and the rest adults, both men and women. They walked for three days, bypassing various checkpoints by hiding in the bush and then moving on between midnight and 2:00 a.m. when the fighters were asleep. Eventually, her pregnancy slowed her down and she was caught by fighters and held at a checkpoint for 30 minutes. They took her jewelry³³ (three rings), some of her clothes and her money. She was freed through the intervention of an elder.

James, an economist who arrived in Monrovia on July 17, said he had managed to avoid the fighters while he lived in NPFL territory by staying on a small rice farm. Otherwise, the local people were harassed by the fighters, who took their property and food, and made them carry loads. He went on:

In early '91, my uncle, a tailor, was beaten severely with his brother. They were tied -- tabeyed³⁴ -- and not released until the fighters were paid money.

I came to Monrovia on the bush road with 41 people. We walked for 13 hours. We left at 11 a.m., stopped at another village until dark, and then continued. We met two fighters along the way, and had to pay them some money. They sent us to the gates [the checkpoints], and we had to pay \$125.

We call Monrovia "America" because it's free. We say we're going to America.³⁵

³¹Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 23, 1991.

³²Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 23, 1991.

³³Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 19, 1991.

³⁴"Tabey" is a form of torture frequently used by the NPFL. It involves tying the hands and elbows of the victim behind his back in such a way as to force the chest to protrude. It causes considerable pain and can result in nerve damage and paralysis of the hands.

³⁵Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 23, 1991.

Without any semblance of the rule of law, civilians often fall prey to arbitrary abuses by the fighters, many of whom are young, undisciplined and unpaid. Among the many cases witnessed by and reported to Africa Watch are the following:

- o On August 22, a foreign priest who obtained a pass to travel from Monrovia to Gbarnga was arrested at a checkpoint just outside Monrovia after soldiers found a calculator they claimed was a communications device. The situation was aggravated when one fighter insisted that he had seen the priest at the VOA station in Monrovia, implying that he was a spy for the United States. In fact, the priest said he had never been to the VOA station. Ultimately, a relief worker learned of the priest's arrest and was able to locate a police official who could authorize the priest's release -- six hours after his arrest.³⁶
- o Mamedou, a former student in Monrovia who spent most of the war in Cape Mount, made it back to Monrovia on July 19. He described the harassment to which civilians are subjected in his village:

I left because there was constant harassment by the freedom fighters. I couldn't take it anymore. If you have things, they take them from you. They force you to work for them, to carry things to the next town.

One night in June, seven fighters came to my town. They woke everyone up and assembled us in the Town Hall. They told us to provide³⁷ them with food, or no one would be allowed to sleep. We were forced to find cassava for them.

- o In May, a group of wives and mothers invited Charles Taylor's wife, Agnes Taylor, to a meeting in Harbel. They asked her to facilitate their pleas to her husband to open the road so that they could be reunited with their husbands and families in Monrovia. Many of their husbands were at work in Monrovia when the fighting hit their area. According to one of the people who was at the meeting, Mrs. Taylor replied: "Liberia is your country. Everywhere in Liberia is your home." The women booed her and walked out.³⁸

Sulima Island

In late March, the NPFL began an incursion into Sierra Leone. Many Liberians who had crossed into Sierra Leone in July 1990 to escape the war in Liberia were again compelled to flee for safety. Several thousand -- reports indicate at least 3,000 -- went to Dier island, at the mouth of a river leading to the ocean, and then on to Sulima Island, an island between Sierra Leone and Liberia. They were largely Fanti fishermen, originally from Ghana, who had lived in Cape Mount before seeking refuge in Sierra Leone.³⁹

Some Fanti in Monrovia approached the interim government about the refugees stranded on the island, pointing out that they were in need of medical care, food and water, and were exposed to the danger of

³⁶Africa Watch interview in Kakata, Liberia, August 22, 1991.

³⁷Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 19, 1991.

³⁸Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 21, 1991.

³⁹Africa Watch interview with James Holder, Minister of Commerce in the Interim Government, August 18, 1991; and interview with two Fanti fisherman involved in the rescue, Monrovia, Liberia, August 18, 1991.

attack by the NPFL. The interim government agreed to supply gas for some fishing vessels -- special Fanti canoes -- which could go to the island and ferry the refugees out. The convoy went to the island, and two canoes were sent in -- but never came back. The convoy saw people on the island setting up machine gun posts, and went back to Monrovia.

Two days later, one of the canoes was released with a ransom note to the interim government: the commandos wanted U.S. \$1,500 for each of the eight captured crew members; \$6,500 for each of the two canoes; 20 bags of rice; one carton of sugar; one carton of mackerel; one carton of sardines; six bottles of Gordon's gin; and 20 cartons of cigarettes.

Before a part of the ransom could be collected and sent to the island, the NPFL had shot three of the captured crew members and severely damaged one of the canoes. It was reported, although Africa Watch has been unable to confirm this independently, that some 20 other Fanti people were also killed at that time on the island. The Fanti who brought the ransom food and money were themselves arrested, subjected to "tabey" and beaten, but later released.

Intolerance of Dissent

Dissent is not tolerated in NPFL territory, creating fear and uncertainty among the civilian population. Open criticism of Charles Taylor or the NPFL fighters is dangerous, and only one newspaper, *The Patriot*, is allowed to publish. According to Archbishop Michael K. Francis: "You are not allowed to speak freely. No one dares to speak up. The thing is, the gun is there, young fellows with guns."⁴⁰ Personal letters are also frequently confiscated by fighters at checkpoints.

Time and again, civilians expressed fear of the fighters. A man from Bong County who travels back and forth into Nimba County commented:

You don't know who is who, you have to be careful who you talk to and where you walk.⁴¹ All along I've been afraid. Anyone can see you and do anything. There is an atmosphere of fear.

In Kakata, a Kpelle man discussed why people are afraid to criticize the NPFL:

It is extremely difficult to criticize Taylor, because of the armed men all around. The people here know that Taylor's boys are around and that you will be marked easily. If you complain, maybe they'll investigate. But then you'll be marked. To criticize him where his boys are all around -- it's difficult.⁴²

Civilians who have spoken out have suffered reprisals. Manny, who arrived in Monrovia in late July, described what happened to a friend of his who criticized Taylor.

In Lofa County in March, a friend of mine made a statement, saying he doesn't know why Taylor won't give in to a peace settlement. For this, four young men fighters⁴³ tabeyed him, gave him 50 lashes and jailed him for two weeks. The fighters must have overheard him.

The following incidences were reported to Africa Watch:

⁴⁰Africa Watch interview with Archbishop Michael Francis, Monrovia, Liberia, August 21, 1991.

⁴¹Africa Watch interview in Danane, Ivory Coast, August 14, 1991.

⁴²Africa Watch interview in Kakata, Liberia, August 22, 1991.

⁴³Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 21, 1991.

- o In August, a teacher wrote a letter to someone he knew in Monrovia detailing his experience during the war and explaining that he had been arrested and detained in Gbarnga. He sent the letter with a market woman, but the letter was confiscated at a checkpoint. The teacher was arrested, and the woman who carried the letter was also jailed for a night.⁴⁴
- o A journalist in Taylor territory was beaten and jailed for three days in the spring of 1991 on the orders of the police director, Anthony Kormuhun. The arrest followed an article the journalist wrote about the illegal sale of electrical power, which implicated the police director in using the police generator to sell power to the public. The article also noted that some people had not even obtained power they had paid for. Subsequently, Taylor ordered the police director himself to be detained. Both men were later reinstated to their jobs.⁴⁵

In March, ECOMOG conducted its first in a series of confidence visits into Taylor territory. The visits were seen as a first step toward opening the roads and ports throughout the country. Visits were conducted to Prince Johnson's base and AFL positions as well. In some areas of the interior, ECOMOG was greeted warmly by the local population. Afterwards, a number of people were accused of being overly enthusiastic and suffered reprisals.

- o One case involved a woman named Mrs. Cooper, who danced during the visit. She was reportedly beaten and jailed for two days. She has told her friends that she is afraid that the NPFL will come back for her.⁴⁶
- o Another woman reported that: "In March, during the confidence visits, most of us were on the road cheering, hoping things would be O.K. Some women -- about six -- were locked up for being so happy. Now women are searched more than men at checkpoints, because they expressed themselves more freely."⁴⁷

In July, about 16 Liberian journalists from Monrovia were invited by Taylor to visit the interior. The journalists were prevented from interviewing civilians along the way and were themselves harassed by NPFL fighters. Describing the experience in *The Inquirer*, a leading independent newspaper in Monrovia, T. Budu Kaisa wrote:

Newspapers from Monrovia are prevented from getting to the people because the top commandos feel they are government propaganda. So, the ordinary citizens and young fighters scrambled over the papers we distributed among them as though it was food or something strange in their lives....

At SKT, a village which lies on the road to Gbarnga, the Pajero jeep carrying some ECOMOG representatives had one of the several breakdowns on the way. While waiting for repairs, the press strolled to a mini-market to interview some marketeers, but Musa [the NPFL's Battle Group Commander] ordered us back in the car saying that was a different territory we were in and shouldn't

⁴⁴Africa Watch interview in Kakata, Liberia, August 22, 1991.

⁴⁵Africa Watch interview in Kakata, Liberia, August 22, 1991.

⁴⁶Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 21, 1991.

⁴⁷Africa Watch interview in Kakata, Liberia, August 22, 1991.

talk to anybody.⁴⁸

West African Nationals

After ECOMOG's arrival in Monrovia in late August 1990, nationals from the countries participating in the contingent -- Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Gambia -- were targeted by the NPFL. Taylor publicly threatened to kill civilians from countries participating in ECOMOG.

Many of these foreign nationals had lived in Liberia for years, and sometimes decades. Hundreds -- if not thousands -- were rounded in late August and early September 1990 and sent to detention camps in the interior, allegedly for their own protection. An unknown number of the men -- at least scores and possibly hundreds -- were killed by the NPFL in August and September.

In March 1991, Taylor announced that the foreign nationals were to be freed. Efforts are currently underway to repatriate them to their countries of origin. Many, however, want to go back "home" to Monrovia, not Lagos or Accra. Like Liberian civilians, they are finding it very difficult to get a pass to Monrovia. Since most of their money and belonging were taken during their detention, they do not have the means either to pay fighters to take them on the bush roads, or to pay the inevitable bribes at the checkpoints.

There were three principal detention centers: the Slokum Mission and the Saa Philip Joe Mission, both on the outskirts of Kakata; and the Flamingo Logging Camp, in Grand Bassa county.

In interviews with Africa Watch, West Africans who remain at Saa Philip Joe Mission⁴⁹ stated that there had been close to 400 detainees, and about 76 remain. Of those who left, some were repatriated, but most either went to Kakata or Monrovia, via the bush roads. During their detention, they were not permitted to leave the camp, and were severely flogged and sometimes jailed for short periods if they tried to do so. Overcrowding was also a serious problem. The male detainees were forced to work for their guards, doing such tasks as cutting the grass and cleaning. Children were also forced to cook, make the fires, do the washing and fetch water.

G., a Ghanaian who had lived in Liberia for 10 years, explained why he and the others remained at Saa Philip Joe Mission:

On March 18, the CIC [commander in chief] and his wife came here and told us that he was going to prepare a clearance for us as a way to ensure our evacuation. But it never came -- he just lied. We're still here because we're still waiting for the clearance.⁵⁰

Similar conditions prevailed at Slokum mission. There had been over 1,000 held there -- some 700 Nigerians, 200 Ghanaians, about 25 Sierra Leoneans, and some Guineans. While most have relocated, almost 40 remain. They reported that many of them had tried to escape, but none had been successful. Before the releases, overcrowding had been a serious problem, with some 108 people sleeping on the floor of a church. "In some places, more than 200 people had to sleep," a Ghanaian woman commented. "You could barely open the door."⁵¹ A Nigerian journalist who was brought to Slokum in September 1990 explained: "We have been kept here. They took all our clothes, everything we had. Except our lives."⁵²

⁴⁸T. Budu Kaisa, "Inside Taylor's Camp," *The Inquirer*, July 12, 1991.

⁴⁹Africa Watch interviews at Saa Philip Joe Mission, August 22, 1991.

⁵⁰Africa Watch interview at Saa Philip Joe Mission, August 22, 1991.

⁵¹Africa Watch interview at Slokum Mission, August 22, 1991.

⁵²Africa Watch interview at Slokum Mission, August 22, 1991.

J., a Ghanaian student whose father and three brothers were taken in August 1990 by Taylor's forces and never heard from again, explained:

We used to have roll call at 6 a.m. to find if the prisoners were here. We were guarded by about 10 soldiers with guns. If we wanted to go for water, we had to get in line. We slept on the ground.

Hostages, POWs -- that's what they called us. Later on, they called us refugees. If anyone tried to go to the bush, they would tabey you and whip you.⁵³

T., formerly a teacher's assistant in Monrovia, described the punishment which many of the detainees suffered:

They would shave your head -- whether you were male or female. In early 1991, about 30 Fula people from Guinea all had their hair shaved as punishment. They would whip you and strip you, just because you had taken some food.

You were not allowed to leave without a pass, and they refused to give me a pass. Maybe they saw me as a little bit too smart. They wouldn't even let me go to see a doctor in Kakata in January or February.

At least a prisoner is told how long he'll be held. In this place, there was no limit.⁵⁴

Mike, a Nigerian who had lived in Liberia for 18 years, was taken from the Nigerian Embassy in Monrovia on August 26, along with 1,800 other foreign nationals.

Slokum Mission was an ordeal, worth writing a book about. It was an African concentration camp. Groups of soldiers would come from Kakata and make us give them money. One man was called Gio Devil. If you refused, you were flogged. The big offense was to go out of the camp. Many people were tabeyed for this, then they'd put you in jail, in a small room. Then your family had to pay the soldiers to free you. The people had to sell all their things to get money. Sometimes the soldiers would say you can't sell without a registration, so you had to pay again. And you couldn't complain.⁵⁵

In late August 1991, it was reported that a spokesman for the Liberian Red Cross announced that Taylor had agreed to free 800 West African nationals, and that arrangements were being made for them to be repatriated. Taylor has refused to allow them to leave via Monrovia; instead, they are to leave by road to the Ivory Coast or out of the port of Buchanan.⁵⁶

Other Targeted Groups

Other groups mistaken for Krahn or Mandingo have also been targeted in NPFL territory, particularly the Grebo and the Vai. Anyone who served or cooperated with the Doe government is also liable to suffer abuse.

⁵³Africa Watch interview at Slokum Mission, August 22, 1991.

⁵⁴Africa Watch interview at Slokum Mission, August 22, 1991.

⁵⁵Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 21, 1991.

⁵⁶Klon Hinneh, "Taylor Says He'll Free 800 Foreign Nationals," *Associated Press*, August 29, 1991.

The Grebos are in a particularly difficult situation. Since many are from Grand Gedeh, the NPFL assumes they are Krahn. The Krahn, on the other hand, believing that the Grebo collaborated with the NPFL, view them with hostility. John, a Grebo who left Liberia for the Ivory Coast in April 1991, explained: "Once the Taylor groups sees on your card that you're from Grand Gedeh, they assume that you are Krahn." He continued:

There's no way I'd go to my home in Grand Gedeh, because you have to pass through Krahn lines -- their section of the country, especially Zwedru. I'm afraid of both Krahn and Taylor people. In early 1991, Krahn soldiers killed about 19 Grebo people in Grand Gedeh. The Krahn feel that the Grebo are against them. There are historical tensions. If you come across rebel fighters who don't know the difference between Krahn and Grebo, you're in trouble.⁵⁷

Frederick, a 27-year-old Grebo, told Africa Watch that he had tried to travel to Monrovia on two different occasions and was sent back both times:

Several times, they [the fighters] would say that I was a Krahn man. I would tell them that I am a Grebo man. In my case, one of them [the fighters] said he would see if I could speak Grebo, and he brought over a Grebo boy who was a freedom fighter. Then they let me go. This was in July 1991.⁵⁸

The majority of the Vai people are Muslim, like the Mandingos, and are sometimes mistaken for Mandingo. During the war, the Mandingos, who were accused of having collaborated with the Doe regime, were hunted down and killed by the NPFL. Hundreds died and thousands fled the country.

Although Charles Taylor is reported to have given assurances to the Muslim community in February, many Muslims continue to fear reprisals from the NPFL. A Vai woman told Africa Watch:

If they [the NPFL] find you praying, they can kill you as a Mandingo. One of my uncles in Bong Mines was killed in May because he was praying. He is a Vai man but they considered him to be Mandingo⁵⁹ because he was praying on a mat. This is why most people are risking their lives to come to Monrovia.

Another Vai man interviewed by Africa Watch stated:

The fighters told us that we are not allowed to pray in mosques. We are under their control, so we stopped. We began to pray in our rooms -- secretly.⁶⁰

According to a man who travels frequently in Taylor territory:

People are arrested -- there's no court, no process of law. They accuse you of being Mandingo or Krahn, there's nothing you can do. One fellow named Dedon was accused of being Mandingo, though he was really Sosoe. He was killed in February in Bomi County. He was in his early 40s. Another man, Rufus Wilson, was considered to be a Krahn. He was killed in Bomi, also in February. I don't know if he was

⁵⁷ Africa Watch interview in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, August 16, 1991.

⁵⁸ Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 18, 1991.

⁵⁹ Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 19, 1991.

⁶⁰ Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 19, 1991.

Krahn or not.⁶¹

The simple fact of being related to a former official of the Doe regime has been used as a pretext to threaten, arrest or mistreat civilians. A relief worker noted:

All the willing or unwilling members of Doe's government are at risk. Their children are afraid now; they fear they will suffer the same fate as their fathers.⁶²

There are also concerns for the families of those with positions in the interim government. The family of at least one official has been threatened by NPFL fighters, including threats to burn their town. In March, the official received a letter from his family that stated: "we are living in the shadow of death because of you."⁶³ Some relatives of interim government officials have changed their names to hide their identity.

Various sources pointed to the case of Yarsuo Weh-Dorliae, National Chairman for United Nimba Citizens in America, as a reason for fearing such repercussions. In September and October 1990, Weh-Dorliae was interviewed on foreign radio programs, including the BBC, and expressed support for the interim government and criticized Taylor. Later in October, his home village in Nimba County, Mehnla, was partially burned down by the NPFL. In March 1991, when Weh-Dorliae returned to Monrovia for the All Liberia Conference, his village was attacked again. His brother, John, who had been detained by the NPFL from approximately October 1990 until April 1991, has been threatened with reprisals if his brother continues to speak out. As a result, Weh-Dorliae has decided not to make further public statements.⁶⁴

An educator from Nimba County, a Mano, who left Liberia in May 1991 out of fear for his security, commented on the situation faced by former officials.

When I first returned behind rebel lines, I was afraid of the fighters, because of my former position. But they were only friendly -- no one troubled me or my family.

But after the Banjul meeting in March, when Liberians abroad began saying that Taylor shouldn't be President, he began to feel skeptical about educated people. I was informed secretly that educated former officials were being looked for, that those who served or cooperated with the Doe government would be dealt with accordingly.⁶⁵

Efforts to Lodge Complaints

There is no adequate system in place for civilians to lodge complaints against NPFL fighters. Despite recent statements by NPFL officials promising to discipline fighters, most people continue to be afraid of repercussions if they complain. In addition, there is a general sense that complaints are futile, since those responsible for investigating the complaints are themselves often implicated in the problem.

However, there are some signs that NPFL authorities are sometimes willing to listen to complaints.

⁶¹Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 19, 1991.

⁶²Africa Watch interview in Danane, Ivory Coast, August 13, 1991.

⁶³Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 20, 1991.

⁶⁴Africa Watch telephone interview with Yarsuo Weh-Dorliae, National Chairman for United Nimba Citizens in America, October 9, 1991.

⁶⁵Africa Watch interview in Danane, Ivory Coast, August 14, 1991.

- o On August 2, Harry, an economist, woke up in the morning to find Saye, a fighter, at his house. The fighter told Harry and his family to leave the house, claiming it was his because he had left some looted goods there. The neighbors confirmed that the house belonged to Harry's family. Harry decided to proceed with a complaint: "I decided it was do or die," he said in an interview with Africa Watch. He went to the NPFL deputy commander for Grand Bassa County, who ordered the fighter to be detained for a short period. According to Harry, the deputy commander said that he received too many complaints about fighters, and that this time he was going to take some action. Harry told Africa Watch: "I was very surprised. But I think it was a one-shot deal."⁶⁶
- o On July 29, the County Administrator for Grand Bassa -- Ammen Soloman -- was jailed after he complained about harassment. He had gone to represent the grievances of the citizens of #2 district who accused fighters of regularly confiscating their belongings. If the citizens tried to resist, they fighters often subjected them to "tabey" and beatings. Soloman took the complaint to the 4th battalion commander -- Johnson Leaman --- who had him stripped naked and detained for about 12 hours. Then he was under house arrest for another 12 hours, after which he was taken to Gbarnga to meet with Taylor. Following the meeting,⁶⁷ Taylor apologized and he was released. He is still the country administrator.

There have been some instances in which notoriously abusive commanders have been replaced. In the first few months of 1991, for example, the commander of Harper was replaced.⁶⁸ Similarly, a middle-level commander in Bomi named Kuttur was replaced in July after international nongovernmental organizations complained to Taylor about the commander's repeated harassment of their relief convoys.⁶⁹ On the whole, however, civilians behind Taylor lines do not feel confident that abusive officials are being sufficiently disciplined. On the occasions when action is taken, it is usually against a middle-level fighter, not the senior commanders.

A Kpelle man who travels between Ivory Coast and Nimba County explained that the lack of a chain of command contributed to the confusion. If a civilian decides to lodge a complaint, it is often difficult to know who to approach.

If someone did something to you and you want to follow up on it, there are many stumbling blocks. You have to be part of the cliques -- the tribe, the soldiers.⁷⁰

Abuses Against Women

Africa Watch has heard many reports about special problems faced by women, particularly rape. Information about specific cases is difficult to obtain, because the shame associated with rape makes it difficult for women to talk about their experiences. Even their relatives have trouble finding out what happened. One man interviewed by Africa Watch said that his cousin, a woman named Della, was picked up by NPFL fighters in late July on her way from the market, and was forced to spend three days with a fighter before she finally escaped. "When I asked her what happened, she would just cry and wouldn't want

⁶⁶Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 20, 1991.

⁶⁷Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 20, 1991.

⁶⁸Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 17, 1991.

⁶⁹Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 17, 1991.

⁷⁰Africa Watch interview in Danane, Ivory Coast, August 14, 1991.

to discuss it."⁷¹

In some areas of the interior, reports indicate that young women ask doctors to admit them to the hospital to get them out of situations where they are being forced to have sexual relations with fighters.

Fighters also often harass women to extort sexual favors, according to a number of relief workers interviewed by Africa Watch.

VIOLATIONS BY PRINCE JOHNSON AND THE INPFL

Prince Johnson's INPFL, which controls only its base in Caldwell, is responsible for cases of killings, arbitrary arrest and physical abuse of civilians, including women in the vicinity. Prince Johnson is not accountable to any other authority; there are no procedures in place for bringing him to justice. The interim government, lacking any troops, is effectively powerless to intervene since its authority is not recognized by Johnson. Johnson himself has been variously described as erratic, mentally unstable and psychotic. He has set up his own checkpoints to guard his base and often institutes a curfew in Caldwell.

It was Johnson who first broke the cease-fire: within days of the agreement, Johnson sent his fighters to attack the AFL at the Ministry of Defense, killing five soldiers and capturing a lieutenant. Johnson was quoted as saying:

We will continue to fight until the interim government makes a decision on whether it will use my army or the AFL.⁷² Doe did not go to Banjul to elect an interim government. We elected Sawyer. ECOMOG has failed.

Summary Executions

Johnson is responsible for a number of cases of summary executions at his base in Caldwell, including the following:

- o In early October, INPFL fighters executed Zogon G. Korto, a businessman living in Caldwell, and his girlfriend, Jenneh Sarnor. According to a statement issued by Johnson, his fighters had been sent to Korto's home to arrest him on suspicion of working with ULIMO, the Krahn-based resistance movement fighting the NPFL in Sierra Leone. Korto was said to have resisted arrest and fired on the INPFL, and Korto and Sarnor were seriously injured in the fighting and died shortly afterwards in a hospital. However, other reports suggest that Johnson had a disagreement with Korto and simply ordered his execution and that of his girlfriend.⁷³
- o On October 1, George Myeis was reportedly shot by Prince Johnson or his fighters. Myeis, who was a former AFL soldier and also worked with the Liberian Petroleum Refining Company (LPRC), was apparently accused of spying.⁷⁴

⁷¹Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 20, 1991.

⁷²"Cease-fire 'Short-Lived'; Johnson Attacks," *BBC World Service, Focus on Africa Program*, November 30, 1990, reprinted in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, December 3, 1990.

⁷³Africa Watch telephone interview with Gabriel Williams, editor of *The Inquirer* newspaper in Monrovia, October 4, 1991.

⁷⁴Africa Watch telephone interview with Gabriel Williams, editor of *The Inquirer* newspaper in Monrovia, October 4, 1991.

In an emergency meeting on October 3 the cabinet of the interim government condemned these killings. On October 7, Johnson declared that any attempt to arrest him would be a "declaration of another war."⁷⁵

- o In late July, Prince Johnson summarily executed at least four and possibly up to six fighters and civilians in Caldwell. The execution of four commandos was confirmed by *The Scorpion* newspaper, the official voice of the INPFL. The paper quoted Johnson as saying: "Betraying the interests of the Independent Patriotic Front amounts to a soldier digging his own grave."⁷⁶ Of those executed, Moses Varney, former deputy battle group commander, was charged with espionage; Sylvester David, David White and Boimah Camara were charged with armed robbery and intimidation of citizens.⁷⁷ In addition, Varney's wife was reportedly executed because Johnson believed that she knew about her husband's plan. Reports indicate that a male teacher in Caldwell was also executed.⁷⁸

The executions were condemned by ECOMOG and the interim government. ECOMOG issued a statement saying that the killings were "uncalled for when every effort is geared toward an urgent and peaceful end to the Liberian crisis." For its part, the interim government ordered an investigation⁷⁹ -- it was the first time that the interim government had openly criticized Johnson. After the interim government condemned the executions, Prince Johnson withdrew from the government. Vice President Peter Naigow's resignation was accepted on August 13.⁸⁰

It is difficult to confirm reports of other recent executions in Caldwell, but Africa Watch has been told of the following cases:

- o In May, Johnson reportedly shot four of his commandos whom he suspected of collaborating with foreign mercenaries to have him killed. There was no formal investigation of the charges; the executions followed shortly after Johnson made the accusation. Johnson himself killed one of the four; the others were killed by a fighter known as "I Meant it."⁸¹
- o In early 1991, *West Africa* magazine reported that Johnson ordered the killing of Emma Obuke, a Nigerian living in Caldwell. Obuke was killed at his home together with his six-year-old son. The killing was apparently in retaliation for ECOMOG's confining Johnson to his base.⁸²

⁷⁵Liberia: Johnson on Killings at Caldwell: Alleges 'Plot' By Minister and Others," AFP, October 8, 1991, reprinted in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, October 10, 1991.

⁷⁶Klon Hinneh, "Rebel Leader Executes Loyalists for 'Betrayal,' Robbery," *The Associated Press*, August 1, 1991.

⁷⁷"Liberia: INPFL Still in Peace Plan: Executions Confirmed," Radio ELBC, August 2, 1991, printed in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, August 5, 1991.

⁷⁸Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 18, 1991.

⁷⁹"INPFL Executions," *West Africa*, 12-18 August, 1991, p. 1336.

⁸⁰"Interim Vice President's Resignation Accepted," Monrovia Radio ELBC, August 14, 1991. Reprinted in FBIS August 15, 1991.

⁸¹Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 19, 1991.

⁸²"Vengeance Killing," *West Africa*, 25 February-3 March, 1991, p. 275.

Arbitrary Arrest, Detention and Harassment of Civilians

In February 1991, a five-man committee, known as the Wise Men, was established to mediate between the interim government and Johnson, who they believed had to be brought into the peace process. All were members of the Interim Assembly of the Interim Government. The chair of the committee was A.T. Nah, and the other members were Johnson Gwaikolo, Ishmael Campbell, J. Khankon Toe and Henry K. Marvie.

A meeting finally took place in February at the Ducor Hotel between Johnson and his lieutenants, and members of the interim government, including President Sawyer. When Johnson was ready to leave, as a goodwill gesture, he suggested that the Wise Men escort him back to his base, rather than the usual ECOMOG escort. They agreed and, soon after arriving at the base, the five men were taken hostage and subjected to abusive and humiliating treatment. Henry Marvie told Africa Watch what happened:

We bade him [Johnson] farewell and started to go, when we met a group of religious people outside his house. Johnson came out and said [to] join [them] in prayer. So we joined them. Then Johnson's deputy, Varney, came in and said that these people are not friends but enemies, that he saw four trucks of ECOMOG soldiers at the gate, and that ECOMOG was going to attack the base. He said 'these men will stay here; you are all my prisoners.' Johnson rushed to the room and got guns for his men, saying 'Varney, you're right.'

We were taken to the MP quarters to sleep, then taken to the warehouse next to his house. There was no room to lie down. The soldiers outside the door made threatening remarks.

The next day, Saturday, we were carried to an isolated area in Caldwell but off the base. We were all stripped to our underwear except Johnson Gwaikolo, who was allowed to keep his clothes on because he was from Nimba. Ishmael was made to sit on a hill of driver ants -- big ants that bite -- for a few minutes, until Prince Johnson said it was enough. Then we were all put in a room and locked up. Johnson always took the key. He said 'you'll stay until the government does what I ask.'

On Sunday, they filled glasses with Bacardi rum and we were forced to drink it -- everyone except Gwaikolo. I thought that they had poisoned the liquor and that we would die. I refused to drink it, but they held my nose and opened my mouth and forced me to drink. We were forced to drink three glasses. We all vomited all night. Gwaikolo took care of us.

On Monday, Dr. Carlon, the acting minister of sports, came to the base and by chance met Prince. Johnson told him 'I have your boys inside and won't release them until all the ECOMOG guns pointed at the base are removed.' Carlon talked to ECOMOG, who promised that when Dogonyaro [Ecomog commander] returned (he was out of the country), the guns would be removed. So Carlon told Prince, [but] Carlon was arrested. He was undressed, made to lie down, tied up and pushed into our room. They forced him to drink the other prisoners' urine. We slept there that night.

The next day, a bus came. We were told to bathe and put our clothes on. All of our money was stolen, but we finally went home.⁸³

No investigation or prosecution was ever launched.

Civilians living in Caldwell are also subject to Johnson's erratic and abusive behavior. One man who had lived in Caldwell from October 1990 until late July 1991 told Africa Watch that he had fled because

⁸³Africa Watch interview with Henry K. Marvie in Monrovia, Liberia, August 20, 1991.

the tension was too great.

Sometimes, I couldn't get home because Johnson would close the gate at 6:00 p.m. No one could go in, no one could come out. Some days, no one is allowed out at all, although if you know someone at the gate they might let you go. There are times that you are actually scared walking on the road at 5:30 or 6:00 in the evening. People stay inside; the roads are clear. Some days, I wonder what is going on. I'm afraid of that place. Even his fighters are afraid of being around when he's drunk.⁸⁴

Abuses Against Children: The Orphanage

Many observers have expressed concern about the orphanage on Johnson's base, which houses about 172 children. Visitors to the orphanage have reported that the children were recently moved to a smaller building which is overcrowded and surrounded by barbed wire and guards. According to a visitor: "The children are very withdrawn, they don't react like normal children -- they're not inquisitive, open or cooperative."⁸⁵ Johnson does not allow the orphans to go to school in Monrovia, claiming that they would be kidnapped.

According to both Liberian and foreign relief workers, Johnson is using the children as human shields. "As long as they're there, nobody will attack his camp," one relief worker noted.⁸⁶

In many respects, Johnson's orphanage is a military operation. Credible reports indicate that Johnson conducts periodic recruitment campaigns in the orphanage, and that all the children over 14 years old enlist.

Until early 1991, Johnson repeatedly showed the children a video made by the INPFL of the interrogation, torture and murder of former President Doe. The video was widely described as horrific.

ABUSES BY THE ARMED FORCES OF LIBERIA

The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) remains on its base at the Barclay Training Center in Monrovia and at Camp Schiefflin, just outside the city. The Army, which is dominated by Krahn, was closely associated with Doe's reign of terror. Civilians in Monrovia and Taylor territory are particularly fearful of these soldiers, and rumors are rife in both areas of Krahn soldiers conducting secret executions and terrorizing the population.

Because of the AFL's past conduct, the general population is extremely mistrustful of its soldiers. Most Liberians agree that the composition of the army must be changed to reflect the national character and its range of ethnic groups. However, the question then arises as to what will happen to the current Krahn soldiers. One observer noted:

What are you going to do with the AFL? They can't go back to Grand Gedeh -- there's nothing there and they would be killed. No one wants them. They are not going to leave people alone until they feel secure -- and how are you going to make them feel secure under these circumstances?⁸⁷

Beatings and Harassment of Civilians

⁸⁴ Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 20, 1991.

⁸⁵ Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 18, 1991.

⁸⁶ Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 18, 1991.

⁸⁷ Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 19, 1991.

Although many accounts are difficult to confirm, soldiers are alleged to have been involved in looting, beatings and general harassment of civilians. Among the incidents documented by Africa Watch are the following:

- o On June 5, Krahn soldiers attacked Sando Wayne, an assistant minister of the interim government -- beating him, breaking his arm and knocking him unconscious -- apparently because he was driving one of Doe's old cars.
- o On July 12, two people living in the Sinkor area of Monrovia were reportedly beaten by 10 men believed to belong to the AFL.⁸⁸
- o In February, a 23-year-old man had gone to visit some elders, when a Krahn soldier grabbed him, took off his shirt, accused him of working with Prince Johnson and threatened to kill him. A witness to the incident interceded to save him.⁸⁹

Soldiers are also illegally occupying homes in Monrovia, particularly in the Sinkor area. The AFL presence in Sinkor, and the absence of electricity, makes it particularly dangerous at night.

Investigations of Harassment

On July 21, 1991, the AFL established a board of inquiry to investigate allegations that AFL soldiers were harassing of civilians. According to General Hezekiah Bowen, commander-in-chief of the AFL, the board will be led by AFL Inspector-General Willie Dennis and will include two members of the ECOMOG peacekeeping force.⁹⁰

Recently, it was reported that Lt. Henry Shar, an army officer, had been "dishonorably discharged" from the AFL for alleged looting, and that the Justice Ministry will prosecute him.⁹¹

THE REFUGEES

The civil war forced more than 750,000 Liberians to flee the country; most have sought refuge in neighboring countries.⁹² According to the U.S. State Department's Refugee Bureau,⁹³ as of July 1991 there

⁸⁸"Liberia: paper reports cabinet minister flogged by armed men," AFP July 16, 1991. Reprinted in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, July 18, 1991.

⁸⁹Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 23, 1991.

⁹⁰"Liberia: Army to Investigate Cases of Civilian Harassment," AFP, July 22, 1991, printed in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, July 24, 1991.

⁹¹"Civilian Harassment," *West Africa*, 5-11 August, 1991, p. 1295.

⁹²There are also hundreds of thousands of displaced persons within the country. Monrovia has swollen to almost double its pre-war size. Current estimates put the population of Monrovia at 800,000.

⁹³Testimony of Princeton N. Lyman, Director of the Bureau for Refugee Affairs, before the Subcommittee on Africa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, July 16, 1991.

were an estimated 227,500 Liberians in the Ivory Coast, 342,000 in Guinea,⁹⁴ 6,000 in Ghana, and smaller numbers in Nigeria, Gambia and Mali. There had been some 125,000 Liberians in Sierra Leone, but the recent incursion reduced that number to 10,000. Liberians continue to leave their country because of continuing insecurity, though in much smaller numbers.

Until recently, Liberians refugees were not turned back from neighboring countries and in most cases, they were welcomed by the local population. There are no refugee camps in Guinea or the Ivory Coast, and the refugees often live in local villages, (in some cases Liberians now outnumber the original inhabitants of the village). However, the Ivory Coast government is becoming stricter about new arrivals: most Liberians who come to the Ivory Coast now are considered "tourists," with the exception of those who are fleeing actual combat, such as those who escaped Grand Gedeh in July. This policy is linked to the government's efforts to reduce the number of refugees eligible for assistance, which they contend was inflated due to widespread fraud, while raising the level of rations offered to refugees.⁹⁵ The government is also trying to encourage as many refugees as possible to return home. Under the new policy, many of the recent arrivals are not eligible for assistance in the Ivory Coast. A relief worker in Danane explained the effect of this policy on the refugees:

A lot of people are going to have to make the hard choice to go back. The government policy is that there is no more war in Liberia, so the assistance should be tightened.⁹⁶ But while the widespread killing has stopped, it is still a very abusive and tense situation in Liberia.

However, officials in the Ivory Coast are not using force to persuade the refugees to leave. An official in Danane expressed some of the government's ongoing concerns:

During the war, Taylor distributed many arms -- he doesn't know who has them, and they are arms of war. This will be a problem for tomorrow, because without control of the arms, there will be a permanent danger to travel in Liberia. For now, there's no security. We're not going to send them [the refugees] back to get shot.⁹⁷

According to a number of people interviewed in Danane,⁹⁸ a disturbing incident took place in early July. The interim government sent representatives to Danane to collect names of those who wanted to be repatriated to Monrovia. The authorities in Danane asked for the list, which contained 1,500 names, and reportedly gave a copy to Taylor. All those on the list are now afraid to return to Liberia.

Some refugees cross back and forth across the border, particularly around the areas of Danane and Tabou in the Ivory Coast. A number of refugees interviewed by Africa Watch around Danane said they go back to their villages and farms in Nimba County, but leave their families in Ivory Coast. A young Gio woman who left her home in Nimba County in June explained the fear that keeps refugees from returning

⁹⁴The UNHCR estimates that an additional 100,000 refugees have entered Guinea from Sierra Leone, making the total number of refugees over 400,000.

⁹⁵In fact, the rations are being returned to their previous levels. The refugees are now entitled to 9.5 kilos of rice per person per month, up from 5 kilos. In May 1991, the rations had been decreased to 5 kilos.

⁹⁶Africa Watch interview in Danane, Ivory Coast, August 13, 1991.

⁹⁷Africa Watch interview with Dibonan Koné, secrétaire général de la préfecture de Danane, Ivory Coast, August 14, 1991.

⁹⁸Africa Watch interviews in Danane, Ivory Coast, August 13, 1991.

home:

With the rebel soldiers, we don't have much problem because we are from the same group. If you know how to live among them, you'll get along. Besides, they are careful with the refugees because they want them to return. I want to go back, if things can stay normal. But I'm not sure that another war won't break out. I'm afraid of what might happen because of my past experience.⁹⁹

Liberians continue to leave their country in search of security and food. A refugee worker in Danane discussed why Liberians continue to leave:

There is a general fear, and general insecurity. Many of these people left their original place of residence a year ago, and have been displaced since then. They are leaving a place that's destroyed; they are fed up with living in uncertainty. It is true that many people are moving back and forth, but we don't know how many.¹⁰⁰

The question of repatriating the hundreds of thousands of refugees who wish to return to Liberia will be an important issue in the pre-electoral period. However, any repatriation effort must take into account the security needs of the refugees, so they are able to resettle on their farms and villages and secure a productive life.

UNITED STATES POLICY: TESTING THE "SPECIAL" RELATIONSHIP

The U.S. does not recognize any government in Liberia, neither the interim government of Amos Sawyer, nor the administration of Charles Taylor. It maintains a policy of neutrality, and endeavors to maintain ties with all factions. The justification for this position is that the United States recognizes countries, not governments, and that the American Ambassador will present his credentials only to a unified government that has been chosen through free and fair elections.¹⁰¹ This position surprises many Liberians, who argue that the interim government was duly elected in the All Liberia Conference in March-April 1991.

Paralleling the U.S. policy of "neutrality" is the alarming U.S. silence in the face of continuing human rights abuses. In testimony on July 16, 1991, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman Cohen, barely mentioned human rights violations in discussing Liberia. The only comment in his testimony that touched on the subject was the following: "Most tragically, horrific human rights abuses have been perpetrated by the combatants on the civilian population of all ages and ethnic groups."¹⁰² American Embassy representatives in Monrovia are taking a similar "hands-off" approach to human rights abuses.

The Bush Administration has been trying to dismiss Liberia as a mess, calling for "an African solution to an African problem." This contrasts markedly with the past U.S. policy of supporting the cruel and corrupt regime of President Doe, while minimizing his government's egregious human rights abuses. During most of the 1980s, the Reagan and Bush Administrations spent half a billion dollars in foreign aid

⁹⁹Africa Watch interview in Gbaleu, Ivory Coast, August 14, 1991.

¹⁰⁰Africa Watch interview in Danane, Ivory Coast, August 14, 1991.

¹⁰¹Africa Watch interview with Charles Gurney, U.S. State Department desk officer for Liberia, September 26, 1991.

¹⁰²Testimony of Herman Cohen, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Africa, July 16, 1991.

for Liberia, making it the largest recipient of U.S. aid in sub-Saharan Africa. The massive infusion of American money served to prop up Doe's regime, despite the overwhelming evidence that Doe was vicious, unreliable and had no intention of keeping his promises about instituting democracy. Blaine Harden, a former *Washington Post* correspondent in Africa who covered Liberia in the mid-1980s, discussed the U.S. relations with Doe.

What the Americans ended up buying was neither stability nor democracy. They paid, instead, for Doe's legitimacy: weapons to coerce loyalty, money to rent it. The skinny backwoods sergeant was more cunning than he looked. Repeatedly, he outfoxed the State Department. He promised to return to his barracks, which he did not. He promised free and fair elections, which he rigged. He promised financial discipline, which he faked. For his every promise, the U.S. government rewarded him with aid. For his every betrayal, the U.S. government accepted another promise....

By propping up a widely hated, wildly corrupt, and laughably incompetent leader, the U.S. government prolonged human suffering in Liberia, postponed economic development, and put off the inevitable collapse of the Doe regime.¹⁰³

This close association with the Doe regime should have dictated a close involvement with post-Doe Liberia. Instead, the United States has done a complete about-face, and Liberia is now considered virtually irrelevant to the U.S. This shift, and the accompanying silence about ongoing human rights abuses, is bewildering to many Liberians.

An editorial in *The Washington Post* pointed out this shift in U.S. policy:

The contrast between the direct and high-profile U.S. role in Ethiopia and southern Africa and the low-keyed, backseat position assumed by the State Department during Liberia's crisis couldn't be sharper. The geopolitical connotations of the first two situations account for one part of the difference. U.S. wariness -- and weariness -- toward Liberia may account for the second part....A great deal of American credibility as well as money was lost by backing a corrupt regime."¹⁰⁴

To its credit, the U.S. has been the largest donor to the Liberian relief effort, providing more than 60 percent of the international contribution. According to a State Department document published in July, U.S. assistance has totaled \$131.8 million, including: \$112.1 million in food for peace; \$12 million for refugee programs in the neighboring countries; \$4.8 million in A.I.D. grants to international organizations and private relief groups;¹⁰⁵ and \$2.8 million in Economic Support Funds to assist ECOMOG's humanitarian assistance activities.

The U.S. has a special responsibility toward Liberia, given both the long-standing historical ties and the role played by the U.S. in setting the stage for the current crisis. Part of this responsibility involves increasing international attention to the human rights situation: European governments and international agencies have long regarded Liberia as a "U.S. problem," and look to the U.S. to take the lead in focusing world attention to Liberia's plight. Referring to U.S. policy on Liberia, President Amos Sawyer expressed the hope of many of his countrymen when he stated: "It's not often that one gets a second chance."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³Blaine Harden, *Africa: Dispatches from a Fragile Continent*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990, pp. 238 and 247.

¹⁰⁴"Liberia: Back to Africa," *The Washington Post*, July 7, 1991.

¹⁰⁵*Liberia Refugee Crisis: Fact Sheet*, Department of State, Bureau for Refugee Affairs, July 1991.

¹⁰⁶Africa Watch interview with Amos Sawyer, President of the Interim Government of National Unity, New York,

RECOMMENDATIONS

Many Liberians are pinning their hopes on elections -- under international supervision -- as the only possible solution to the current political and military stalemate. However, meaningful elections cannot take place until citizens are free from fear of summary execution, arbitrary arrest, physical abuse and general harassment. A key step in this process is disarming and "encamping" the various armed forces. But none of the parties to the conflict will disarm while they feel vulnerable. A process must be devised to ensure the security of the combatant forces, while guaranteeing the safety of the civilian population. The international community has a clear role to play in breaking this stalemate and paving the way for free and fair elections.

In addition, Africa Watch believes that accountability for past abuses of human rights should be a goal of the new government of Liberia if it seeks to promote respect for human rights. This should be pursued regardless of whether the perpetrators of such abuses are members of the current government, the armed forces, the Doe government or the insurgent factions.

Africa Watch calls on all combatant forces, particularly the NPFL and the INPFL, to:

- o Put an immediate end to extrajudicial executions, torture and ill-treatment of detainees;
- o Stop arbitrary arrest and detention of civilians, and release all those held who have not been formally charged;
- o Investigate all cases of killing or severe mistreatment of civilians, and prosecute those believed to be responsible;
- o Guarantee freedom of movement within the country by abolishing the requirement for passes, removing the checkpoints and opening the roads;
- o Take immediate steps to disarm and "encamp" all combatants;
- o Permit freedom of expression throughout the country, including distribution of independent newspapers.

In addition, Africa Watch calls on the international community, notably the United States, to:

- o Publicly condemn serious human rights abuses by all sides to the conflict, regardless of perceptions that such condemnations could be an obstacle to the peace process;
- o Urge the combatant forces to disarm all their troops and confine them to barracks;
- o Assist in the international supervision of the forthcoming elections to ensure that they are conducted in accordance with international standards of free and fair elections;
- o Ensure that the repatriation of refugees is pursued while providing for the physical security of the refugees;
- o Engage in constructive intervention to promote human rights, including by joining with African efforts currently underway and by banning arms sales to abusive forces.

October 1, 1991.

PREVIOUS AFRICA WATCH PUBLICATIONS ON LIBERIA:

Newsletters:

Liberia: A Human Rights Disaster; Violations of the Laws of War by All Parties to the Conflict, October 26, 1990.

Nine Years of Doe's Rule: Africa Watch Assesses the Record, April 11, 1989.

Reports:

Liberia: Flight From Terror -- Testimony of Abuses in Nimba County, May 1990, 30 pages. \$5.00

Africa Watch is a nongovernmental organization created in May 1988 to monitor human rights practices in Africa and to promote respect for internationally recognized standards. Its Chair is William Carmichael; its Vice Chair is Alice Brown; its Executive Director is Rakiya Omaar; its Associate Director is Alex de Waal; its Research Associates are Janet Fleischman and Karen Sorensen; its Associates are Ben Penglase and Urmi Shah.

Africa Watch is part of Human Rights Watch, an organization that comprises Americas Watch, Asia Watch, Helsinki Watch and Middle East Watch. The Chair of Human Rights Watch is Robert L. Bernstein and the Vice Chair is Adrian DeWind. Aryeh Neier is Executive Director of Human Rights Watch; Ken Roth is Deputy Director; Holly Burkhalter is Washington Director;

Susan Osnos is Press Director.