



# ALTERNATIVE NATIONAL CONGRESS

## NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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**LIBERIA FIRST**

Office of the National Secretary General

### SPECIAL STATEMENT FROM ALEXANDER B. CUMMINGS ON THE COVID SITUATION IN LIBERIA

*June 22, 2021*

Fellow Liberians,

These are difficult and frightening times for Liberia. Our nation is at the brink of a health crisis as the Covid-19 Pandemic is raging across the country. Our country is currently experiencing a rapidly increasing surge in COVID cases, occasioned by an unimaginable number of hospitalizations and deaths of our people, particularly, in Montserrado county and its environs. We have gone from 2,149 cases a month ago to about 3,146 cases today, thus registering about 1,000 new cases in a month with 14 deaths. Hospitals are running out of beds and life-saving medical oxygen which are in short supply, are being rationed among those in extreme needs. Doctors, nurses and other healthcare practitioners and support staffs are scrambling. People are forced to look on helplessly as their family members and friends who are turned away, suffer, suffocate and die. With over 3,100 confirmed cases, local transmission across the remotest parts of the country where even more weakened health infrastructures exist, will only exacerbate an already worsening health situation in the country, and further risk our sub-region and the world. It does not have to be this way. A responsible government will not allow its people to go through this while they simply watch with no sense of urgency or direction.

Many days I use Facebook which has a lot of Liberian users, to keep them updated on what I am doing and to follow and share in the trends of the day, including the celebration of accomplishments, or the news and gees of our Liberian community, both at home and abroad. I mostly leave Facebook feeling inspired by the resilience and courage of the Liberian people despite the extreme hardship in the country. However, my visits on Facebook in the last few days have been sharply different. The entire platform has been flooded with gloomy stories, obituaries, and tributes to families, loved ones and friends who have suffered and succumbed to the surging COVID 19 virus or turned away from hospital for lack of beds. Like every Liberian, my heart is broken. I am deeply saddened and I feel your pains. The harsh truth is that this too, could have been avoided.

It hurts, particularly, knowing that amidst the already poor leadership of the Weah Administration which has brought untold sufferings, our people now must also deal with a health crisis that could have been avoided. Even now as our people troupe to get vaccinated, they are being turned away as the vaccines are being rationed, only due to

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the fact that of the 123,000 vaccines donated to us, 27,000 donated by the AU expired in 2 weeks upon delivery due to the very low demand. That is about 20% of much needed vaccines, which could have been used in less than a week, expired instead of ensuring every single dose was utilized and not one thrown away. Even those being tested now, have to wait up to 5-7 days to get their results. This is unacceptable.

In the first place, this outbreak should not have reached this far. I just cannot understand why early actions were not taken to impose appropriate restrictions on travelers coming into the country from COVID hotspots around the world. This is a complete leadership failure beyond words.

In the midst of this chaos and existential threat to our people, President Weah without any conscience and sense of responsibility to the people, left on his usual private jet to Ghana. At this point, the President should cancel all further travels and remain in country to lead this effort until this situation is handled. There is no time for politics here. I call on President Weah to LEAD. That is why the people of this country gave him their votes in 2017. They entered a social contract with him to protect them and change their lives. He cannot continue to abandon that responsibility. He cannot continue to lead from the back as has been the case since his ascendancy. At this difficult time, we demand compassionate and prudent leadership, which is clearly lacking.

I know that instead of them working overtime to address the urgent threat on our people, I can assure you, they will do what they know best - find excuses for their failure as usual. They will childishly argue that even some powerful countries around the world were overwhelmed by the virus, and how about a poor country like Liberia? But I tell them, that there are many more countries in the world that prioritized their people by taking scientific and social measures to arrest the virus in its tracks, thus sparing their people the tragedy we face today.

There are a number of recent public measures that have been announced by the government. Speaking to doctors and other health experts, I do not believe that they are enough to address the seriousness of the difficulty we currently face. We need to act more fully to mobilize the nation to take the actions that are required to end the spread.

1. Recast the budget to provide funding for the purchase of beds, PPEs, masks, vaccines, ventilators, oxygen and massive awareness.
2. Solicit additional support from our citizens in the diaspora and our international partners and donor community.
3. Increase the hazard pay of existing health workers and employ more health workers and contact tracers.
4. Immediately close all schools and ensure the completion of the semester from home, pending the end of this crisis.

5. Work with community leaders and community-based organizations to create awareness and help with enforcement of GOL new regulations instead of the use of paramilitary forces. We are at war with COVID and not ourselves.
6. Setup a hotline where people who have families or friends with severe symptoms of COVID can call for help, and can be linked the nearest isolation or health centre or monitored from home.

I offer to work with the government in whatever way I reasonably can to help us out of this situation. The Cummings Africa Foundation is open to working with authorities of the Ministry of Health to identify some of the urgent gaps in the national response that we can make some quick interventions to.

In the meantime, I am appealing to Liberians across the Diaspora to reach out with whatever assistance and support they can mobilize and provide to the government, medical facilities, family members and loved ones in Liberia. Truly, we need each other to help see us through this dark period.

I am also sending out an SOS call to the international community, especially the United States, the European Union, and all friendly nations of the world, for much-needed help with vaccines, medical supplies, ventilators, and other support to our hospitals and community clinics. At home and abroad, as Liberians do all we can to keep ourselves safe and care for those who are sick, I ask the world to also help us. If nothing is done urgently, our numbers will quadruple., more people will get infected and several more will die.

To all Liberians and those within our borders, once again, I urge you all to please act to keep yourself safe. Wear a mask to cover your nose and mouth. Wash your hands with soap and water as often as possible. Keep a safe distance from others. Avoid crowded places, avoid hugging, and avoid shaking hands. The continued failures of the government, however frustrating, do not have to lead to any more avoidable deaths. Each of us need to act to save all of us. Our lives depend on each of us. Please, do whatever you can to save the life of a friend, neighbor, family, someone you love, or may not even know.

And to our health workers who are risking their lives on the frontlines, I send you my love, admiration, and respect. We will pressure the George Weah led government to do the right thing, to give to you the deserved materials and financial support required to help you do your work better at this difficult time.

Fellow Liberians, rest assured, I am coming home immediately from the US where I have been having high level meetings to be with you in this crisis. I promise, I will not allow you to take this difficult road alone. I have already put together a team of advisors who are now working out modalities for our modest but genuine intervention.

My wife Teresa and I again extend our prayers to those suffering from the virus and our comfort and deepest sympathies to all who are grieving and mourning. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of you. We pray for God's divine comfort and healing on all the afflicted. And we pray for our country - that this darkness will end so that we are awakened not just to a new day but to a rebirth of our country.

God Bless you and God Bless Liberia.

Thank you!!

**LIBERIA DESERVES BETTER!**