

ABOVE THE LAW

Human Rights Abuses During the Regime of Joseph N. Boakai



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Human Rights Violations Under President Joseph Boakai's Regime

SUMMARY

The human rights situation in Liberia under President Joseph Boakai has been characterized by widespread impunity, state brutality, and the suppression of dissent. Numerous incidents, including police shootings, custodial deaths, ritual killings, and political intimidation, highlight systemic failures in justice and governance.

Incidents such as the police shootings of Bangalie Kamara, Essah Massaley, and James Kandy have not resulted in prosecutions, perpetuating a culture of impunity. Ritualistic killings, including the murders of Oumar Dukuly and Moses Vesselee, remain unaddressed, reflecting significant gaps in law enforcement capacity or political will. Additionally, custodial abuses and neglect have led to the deaths of individuals such as Morris Gomo and Prince Wreyou, raising questions about accountability within Liberia's justice system.

Political repression has also become a defining feature of the administration. Thomas Etheridge, Maintenance Head in the office of Speaker Koffa, and Eric Susay were tortured and pressured to fabricate lies, exemplifying the misuse of state power to silence individuals. Similarly, Andrew Lawson, a prominent critic of the Boakai administration, has been targeted, signaling a dangerous trend of stifling opposition voices.

Although isolated prosecutions, such as those of Franklin Dargor and Adama Joe, suggest that justice is occasionally served, the overall trend indicates systemic inconsistency. Vulnerable groups, including women and children, remain disproportionately affected. The unresolved murder of Dorothy Nyemah and the delayed response to cases of sexual violence like that of Adama Joe, underscores the system.

KEY STATISTICS

- Total Cases Documented: 17 most egregious and reported
- Cases Without State Prosecution: 26
- Cases With Prosecution: 4

KEY ACTORS

The following individuals form the core group within the administration of President Joseph N. Boakai who are intimately involved—acting individually or in concert—in human rights abuses and the breakdown of the rule of law:

Jeremiah K. Koung – Vice President of the Republic of Liberia

Jeremiah Koung, a Liberian national, who current serves as vice president, is the chief architect of the government’s ethnic cleaning program and is most responsible for promoting political divisiveness in the country. He selects targets and directs the security forces to intimidate, conduct illegal physical and electronic surveillance and suppress perceived opponents.

Oswald Natu Tweh – Minister of Justice, RL

Oswald Tweh is a Liberian national with a permanent residency in the U.S, is primarily responsible for providing legal justification for the unlawful actions of joint security forces, aiding and abetting their abuses under the guise of enforcing state authority.

Samuel Kofi Woods – National Security Advisor, RL

Samuel Kofi Woods, who holds a Dutch passport, coordinates all national security actions, and briefs the President on these matters. He has been implicated in coordinating all of the human rights abuses that have occurred during the Boakai’s administration.

Gregory O. W. Coleman – Inspector General of the Liberian National Police

Gregory Coleman, a Liberian national, conducts police operations based on the whims and caprices of party apparatchiks, targeting perceived enemies of the government. He is primarily responsible for the extraordinary rendition of a Liberian citizen to Guinea in exchange for 12 pickups and 2 million United States dollars. The citizen has not been heard from and is believed to have been killed.

Prince C. Johnson – Director of National Security Agency (NSA), RL

Prince C. Johnson, who holds a Swiss passport, has transformed the U.S.-built NSA headquarters into torture and interrogation chambers. These facilities are used to intimidate and instill fear in Liberian citizens for the benefit of the Unity Party.

Bushenben Keita – Legal Advisor to the President, RL

Bushenben Keita, a Liberian national with U.S. permanent residency, provides legal justification for the government's illegal and unconstitutional actions. These include violating tenure laws, interfering with court cases (including cases involving private parties with political implications), and undermining the judiciary.

CONCLUSION

The Boakai administration has presided over a deteriorating human rights situation where impunity, state violence, and political repression are rampant. The torture of individuals like Thomas Etheridge and Eric Susay, along with the targeting of critics like Andrew Lawson, reflects a troubling abuse of power. These systemic failures demand urgent reform to restore public trust and uphold the principles of justice and human rights in the Republic of Liberia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the grave circumstances articulated above, the following are recommended:

1. Impose Global Magnitsky Sanction against the above listed persons including their families.
2. Impose visa restrictions on the above-named persons and their families
3. Revoke the U.S. visa for a conference in March 2024 for the Vice President of Liberia
4. Revoke the U.S. visas for all senior government officials due to travel to the U.S.
5. Review Liberia's eligibility under the MCC Compact due to the documented human rights violations.

Human Rights Violation During Boakai's Administration

February 2024

- **February 5:** 9 years old, Moses Vesselee was found dead in Bong County. Source : <https://www.ritualkillinginafrica.org/2024/02/19/bong-county-liberia-missing-child-sparks-fear-and-anger/>
Case Status: UNRESOLVED
- **February 28:** Bangalie Kamara and Essah Massaley were both shot and killed by police during a protest in Kinjor, Grand Cape Mount County. Source: <https://analystliberiaonline.com/this-brazen-security-impunity-must-stop-grassroots-defenders-welcomes-kinjor-fatal-violence-probe/>
Case Status: UNRESOLVED

March 2024

- **March 12:** Franklin Dargor was stabbed to death in Cinta Township, Margibi County. Source: <https://frontpageafricaonline.com/crime/liberia-police-charge-man-with-murder-for-allegedly-stabbing-to-death-16-year-old-boy/>
Case Status: UNRESOLVED

April 2024

- **April 12:** Prince Wreyou was found dead while serving detention at the Salent Police Station on the Airfield in Monrovia. His family members blame INHR Commissioner Fahnbulleh. Source: [Liberia: Man Reportedly Hangs Himself in Police Cell Despite Being in Cell with Four Others - FrontPageAfrica](#)
Case Status: UNRESOLVED
- **April 17:** Austine Yarkpawolo was beaten to death by police officers in 72 Community Paynesville. Source: <https://thenewdawnliberia.com/police-brutality-leads-to-death/>
Case Status: UNRESOLVED

May 2024

- **May 30:** Sergeant Bobby Manndeh of the Armed Forces of Liberia was found dead with multiple bullet wounds to his head. The incident occurred while he was serving guard at the Edward Binyah Kesselly Barracks in Schiefflin, Margibi County. Source: [Liberia: Untimely Death of Armed Forces of Liberia's Sergeant and former UN Peace Keeper Raises More Questions Amid Suicide Claim - FrontPageAfrica](#)
Case Status: UNRESOLVED

June 2024

- **June 4:** Armaline Zubah was found dead in Dolo Town, Margibi County. Source: <https://elbcradio.com/2024/06/04/68-year-old-woman-found-dead-in-dolo-town-lower-margibi-county/>

Case Status: UNRESOLVED

- **June 7:** Dorothy Nyemah were found dead in Maryland County and Salayea District, Lofa County. Source: https://thenewdawnliberia.com/maryland-county-woman-found-dead-in-degbor-river/#google_vignette

Case Status: UNRESOLVED

July 2024

- **July 1:** 17-year-old James Kandy was shot and killed by PSU officer Ismael Trawally in the Rehab community, Paynesville, Monrovia. Source: [Liberia: Mother of 17-Year-Old Killed by Police Shares Heartbreaking Story with FrontPageAfrica - FrontPageAfrica](#)

Case Status: UNRESOLVED

- **July 2:** Morris Gomo died in the custody of Cocopa Magisterial Court in Nimba County. source: [CB Dunbar Hospital Allegedly Neglects Patient to Death - THE LIBERIAN INVESTIGATOR](#)

Case Status: UNRESOLVED

September 2024

- **September 26:** An elderly man wearing a CDC T-shirt was denied treatment at CB Dunbar Hospital in Bong County and later died on the hospital premises in agony. Source: [CB Dunbar Hospital Allegedly Neglects Patient to Death - THE LIBERIAN INVESTIGATOR](#)

Case Status: UNRESOLVED

November 2024

- **November 9:** Austin T. Kerkulah, 68, was murdered, and his body was dumped in a fishpond on Taylor's Farm in Melekie Town, Bong County.
- **November 11:** An unidentified woman was murdered, and her body was dumped behind the Gbarnga Regional Security Hub, Bong County. Source: [Two Discovered Dead in Bong | News | liberianobserver.com](#)

Case Status: UNRESOLVED

- **November 14:** Kahalif Cherif, a Liberian-born man accused by the Guinean junta of engaging in subversive activities, fled to Liberia seeking refuge. However, he was subject to harassment by Liberian security forces and soon vanished from prison under mysterious circumstances, Source: <https://frontpageafricaonline.com/editorial/editorial-the-disappearance-of-khalif->

[cherif-and-liberians-crisis-of-governance/](#)
[Liberia: Court Gives Govt 72-Hour Ultimatum - allAfrica.com](#)

Case Status: UNRESOLVED

December 2024

- **December 17:** Concerned citizens who were advocating for democracy and rule of law were tear-gassed, peppered-sprayed and shot at with live bullet.
Source: [Liberia: Protestors 'Betrayed' - allAfrica.com](#)

Case Status: UNRESOLVED

- **December 24:** Hon. Luther Collins was brutalized by the police for trying to attend the Houe of Representatives budget hearing during a dispute with pro-unity party lawmakers. Police was acting under the instructions of Inspector General, Gregory Coleman, in coordination with the ruling party Deputy Speaker
Source: [Liberia: Legislator Files Human Rights Complaint Against Justice Minister, Police Inspector General - FrontPageAfrica](#)
- **December 24:** Hon. Jacob Deebee was also brutalized by the police for trying to attend the Houe of Representatives budget hearing during a dispute with pro-unity party lawmakers. Police was acting under the instructions of Inspector General, Gregory Coleman, in coordination with the ruling party Deputy Speaker
Source: <https://thenewdawnliberia.com/lawmakers-drag-gol-to-inchr/>

Case Status: UNRESOLVED

- **December 31:** South African national Anwar Futloo, manager of Boulevard Palace Hotel, was found dead in a bathroom on 9th Street, Sinkor, Monrovia.
Source: [Boulevard Palace GM's Death Linked to Top GOL Officials? | Crime | liberianobserver.com](#)

Case Status: UNRESOLVED

January 2025

January 14: Thomas Etheridge who was arrested as prime suspect for the Capitol Building fire, accused Joint security of torture, intimidation and coercion to fabricate evidence.
Source: [Liberia: Etheridge Appears in Court Under Supreme Court Order Amid Torture Allegations - FrontPageAfrica](#)

[Liberia: Capitol Building Fire Suspect Accuses Joint Security of Inhumane Treatment to Falsely Incriminate Himself, Colleagues and Lawmakers - FrontPageAfrica](#)

Case Status: ONGOING

January 16: Bai Best was harassed and taken to Police headquarters for being the editor of a newspaper where a story was published accusing government officials of being involved in a murder of the Boulevard Palace Manager, Mr. Anwar Futloo.
Source: [Liberia: Daily Observer journalists harassed by police - IFJ](#)

Case Status: ONGOING

- **January 16:** David Yates, a reporter, was harassed and taken to Police headquarters and made to write criminating statement against himself for accusing Vice President Koung and other ruling party official of being involved in a murder in order to cover up alleged corrupt acts. Liberia during the tenure of President George M. Weah, repealed criminal libel laws.

Source: [Liberia: Daily Observer journalists harassed by police - IFJ](#)

Case Status: ONGOING

- **January 18:** Andrew Lawson, Albert Weah and Eric Susay were picked up by the Anti-Robbery Unit of the Liberia National Police in arrested in connection with the capitol building fire incident. Andrew and Albert released one week later. They both claimed they were victims of tortured and inhumane treatment when they were detained by the Joint Security.

Source: <https://frontpageafricaonline.com/breaking-news/liberia-two-suspects-in-capitol-building-fire-incident-accuse-nsa-of-torture-and-inhumane-treatment/>

Case Status: ONGOING

January 24: John Nyanti was kidnapped by security agents for participation in a protest advocating for democracy and rule of law on December 17, 2024, at the capitol building.

Source: Facebook post

Case Status: ONGOING