

 Vision: “A corruption-free Liberia, where people and institutions in all spheres of society act with integrity, accountability and transparency in all their dealings”

Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia National Chapter

 **Press Statement for Immediate Release**

**CENTAL Commends GOL for Initial Good Governance Efforts; Frowns on Nonchalant Approach to Punishing Officials Accused of Corruption**

Monrovia, Tuesday, November 25, 2024 - Distinguish ladies and gentlemen of the press, we are happy to have you join us for today’s press conference.

Liberia has established the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission, General Auditing Commission, Finance Intelligence Agency and other integrity institutions as well as passed the Whittle Blower Protection, Witness Protection, Code of Conduct for public officials and other key laws to tackle corruption. However, Corruption remains a major governance and development challenge in Liberia. Impunity for corruption, fueled largely by limited political will and or the lack of strong presidential willpower, has been a major stumbling block to credible, impartial, and robust anti-corruption efforts in the country. As a result, public sector corruption remains high, as [Liberia scored 25 out of 100 on the 2023 Corruption Perception Index (CPI)](https://cental.org.lr/index.php/documents/media-center/news/item/132-liberia-declines-in-transparency-international-s-corruption-perception-index-2023) of Transparency International, a huge decline from 32 in 2018. This is not surprising, as CENTAL’s [2023 State of Corruption Report](https://www.cental.org.lr/index.php/documents/reports/state-of-corruption-report) shows that over 90% of Liberians believe that corruption level in government is very high and that their government is not doing enough to tackle it. The country continues her long wait to end gross impunity for corruption, especially in government.

President Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr, assumed state power in January 2024 and made bold commitments to tackle corruption, as a part of broader efforts to break away from “business as usual” in constituting and running government. Since then, his Unity Party-led administration has made strides in promoting good governance and other efforts across the government. Notable mentions include payroll and credential audits that have led to removal of ghost names from the government’s payroll; establishment of the Office of the war and economic crimes court; and the commission of audits that have further shed light on corruption in public service. Recent actions by President Boakai include suspension of officials, including Steve Zargo, Commissioner-General of the Liberia Immigration Service and several officials of Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC). These include Mr. Patrick Worzie, executive director, Mr. Richard Hoff, deputy executive director for operation; and Mr. AJ Armah Karneh, deputy executive director for administration respectively. Others include the dismissals of Colonel Abraham Kromah from the position of Director General of the Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency (LDEA) and Mr. Hassan Fadiga and Mr. Gbawou Kowou, who held the positions of Deputy Director General for Operations and Deputy Director General for Administration, respectively. CENTAL believes that these somehow signify a level of political will against corruption and other forms of abuse of power.

However, several challenges still abound, which significantly undermine the fight against corruption and rule-based dealings in government. On equally important matters and those of perhaps greater proportion and implications for overall accountability and transparency in government, President Boakai is very slow to act or turns a blind eye, fueling allegations of relative partiality in his accountability efforts. CENTAL has observed a tacit attempt by the government to turn a blind eye to critical decisions against some officials alleged to have violated key anti-corruption laws or indulged in corruption and other misdeeds. For instance, part 10 of the amended 2022 Code of Conduct requires both elected and appointed officials of government to declare their assets, incomes, and liabilities before assuming office. As of August 2024, the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) reported that over 70% of officials appointed by President Boakai have refused to declare their assets, incomes and liabilities. Unfortunately, such wanton disregard for a very crucial transparency and accountability process in government has not claimed the attention of President Boakai, as he is yet to warn, suspend and even dismiss the non-compliant officials. This is highly troubling, as it undermines the president’s anti-corruption commitment.

Also, an audit by the General Auditing Commission (GAC) reveals that Mr. Abdullai Kamara, the current Acting Chair of the Liberia Telecommunications Authority (LTA), has been embroiled in violation of the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission (PPCC) Law when he served as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of TAMMA Corporation. The GAC audit found that payments totaling L$262,844,500 and US$450,000 were made to TAMMA Corporation and 231 Data Incorporated without adherence to procurement protocols or documentation.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Press, in the face of this damming report from the GAC, CENTAL is surprised that no public action, including investigation or otherwise, has since been taken against Mr. Kamara. As far as we know, Mr. Kamara still enjoys the confidence of the presidency, as long as he continues to serve at the LTA, the same institution whose resources he is accused of joining ranks with key members of the previous administration to pillage. Ironically, early this year, the President swiftly acted on allegations of corruption at LTA to [suspend the former board of commissioners](https://www.emansion.gov.lr/media/press-release/president-boakai-suspends-board-commissioners-liberia-telecommunications) and made new appointments. How come the President has not acted on GAC’s report on the same LTA implicating Mr. Kamara is a mystery. It is also further concerning that Mr. Kamara and the other Commissioners of the LTA continue to serve in an acting capacity and enjoy all benefits appertaining to the office, since April 2024. We believe that this action is counter-productive, especially in the face of GAC audit findings regarding suspended LTA officials and Mr. Kamara. There is a need for definite position of the President regarding the LTA.

Similarly, ladies and gentlemen of the Press, in the weeks following the commencement convocation of the University of Liberia (UL), Commerce Inspector General, Mr. Dorr Cooper was said to have dressed up in the official graduation regalia, proceeded for the commencement convocation, but could not find his name in the program as a graduate. This situation drew public attention, especially so that a highly-placed public official would attempt to defraud the University by graduating, even though he did not complete the courses required for graduation. Following an investigation into the matter by authorities of the university, Mr. Cooper was found [guilty of fraud and recommended for prosecution.](https://frontpageafricaonline.com/education/liberia-ul-investigation-recommends-prosecution-of-commerce-inspector-dorr-cooper-for-academic-fraud-several-suspended-others-dismissed/) Despite the gravity of the incident and the findings from the investigation, based upon which UL authorities dismissed and suspended some employees, Mr. Cooper has not been dismissed by the President, neither has he been prosecuted. We wonder why.

On the other hand, officials of the ruling Unity Party (UP) appointed by the President, including the Managing Director of the Liberia Petroleum Refinery Company (LPRC), and Secretary General of the UP, Mr. Amos Tweh, and National Port Authority (NPA) Board Chair and National Chairman of the UP, Rev. Luther Tarpeh, amongst others, are being pressured by the Office of Ombudsman to relinquish one position to avoid violation of the Code of Conduct for public officials. The Unity Party (UP) and the Movement for Democracy and Reconstruction (MDR) objected to the position of the ombudsman, through a petition to the Supreme Court of Liberia to halt the enforcement of said portion of the Code of Conduct. In a ruling, the [Supreme Court has upheld](https://liberianinvestigator.com/news/supreme-court-upholds-ombudsmans-order-officials-must-choose-between-government-and-party-roles/) the enforcement of the code of conduct against officials of government occupying political party positions. As majority of the officials concerned have not honored the affirmed Ombudsman’s decision, again, the President is yet to publicly demand the officials concerned to relinquish one of their positions.

These and other developments significantly undermine the fight against corruption and President’s anti-corruption agenda, despite some positive efforts at other ends. If anything, the President must build upon his positive efforts to send stronger messages to government officials, citizens and development partners about his commitment to pursue a robust, transparent, public-interest-driven and an impartial fight against corruption, waste and other misdeeds in government. The President’s apparent shielding of some officials, relative selective actions against persons accused of wrongdoing in his administration, and slow pace of actions/decision-making on critical matters run contrary to his anti-corruption promises.

In conclusion, we call on President Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr. to do the needful to send a stern warning against corruption and abuse of office by taking timely and decisive administrative actions against officials found wanting. The President must remove Mr. Abdullai Kamara as acting chairperson of LTA, dismiss Mr. Dorr Cooper, Inspector General of of the Ministry of Commence and Industry and act against others accused of grave actss of corruption and other abuses. Also, the President must suspend and dismiss public officials who have knowingly and recklessly refused to declare their assets, incomes and liabilities, in violation of the Code of Conduct. Hence, they should be suspended or dismissed. Meanwhile, the President compel his officials to comply with the mandate of the Office of Ombudsman; show leadership by timely and decisively acting on crucial matters, including those bordering on the fight against corruption; and provide adequate moral and financial support to anti-graft institutions to operate at full capacity. Lastly, we encourage civil society, the media, and citizens to remain vocal, robust and constructive in engaging with national and local government processes by demanding accountability from policy makers and denouncing corruption themselves.

Thank you.

Signed: Management