



REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
INDEPENDENT NATIONAL COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (INCHR)
Sinkor, 20th Street, Russell Avenue, Monrovia, Liberia
Email: inchr@inchrlib.org; Website: www.inchrlib.org
+231-777-410-002/+231-888-576-796



Office of the Acting Chairman

STATEMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT NATIONAL COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (INCHR) ON THE JULY 17, 2026 PROTEST MARCH IN MONROVIA

In fulfillment of its statutory mandate to promote and protect human rights through robust monitoring, the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) deployed a team of human rights monitors to observe the protest march organized by Solidarity and Trust for a New Day (STAND) on July 17, 2026.

According to the release of STAND, the primary objective of the demonstration was to demand a credible and independent investigation into a major drug cargo shipment intercepted by airport security at Roberts International Airport (RIA) on June 8, 2026. The organizers demanded that the Government of Liberia arrest and prosecute all individuals connected to the seized narcotics, estimated at a value of US\$19 million, regardless of their political status, influence, or high-ranking positions.

The protest commenced at approximately 1:00 PM with an estimated 1,500 participants. The crowd was predominantly composed of members from STAND, the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC), and the Student Unification Party (SUP) of the University of Liberia. The stated approach or intent of the organizers was to march to the Executive Mansion and remain there until President Joseph Nyemah Boakai personally receives their petition.

However, the strong presence of riot police units and other national security apparatus restricted the protesters to Tubman Boulevard, specifically the narrow corridor between the University of Liberia and the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission (PPCC). This blockade prevented the demonstrators from reaching the Executive Mansion; hence, their intent of delivering the petition to the President was thwarted.

The demonstration was relatively peaceful. INCHR monitors recorded zero incidents of police misconduct or excessive use of force; no reported injuries to civilians or security personnel, and no collateral damage to private or public property.

Despite the peaceful nature of the march, a highly concerning occurrence involving the disarmament of a "plain-clothes individual that is state operative" by some protesters was announced by Mr. Morlu. The STAND Chairman declared in his closing statement that, upon his order, demonstrators had disarmed an armed, plain-clothes Liberia National Police (LNP) officer. Morlu alleged the officer was intentionally planted within the crowd to cause chaos,



which would provide a pretext for a violent police crackdown. Mr. Morlu broadcast the display of the seized weapon live on media outlets. However, LNP Spokesperson, Mr. Sam Collins, denied Morlu's claim, stating that the officer was on his way to work and was not deployed among the demonstrators. When questioned by the INCHR regarding how the officer came into contact with the crowd, Mr. Collins stated that he could not comment as he was not on the scene.

Following the live broadcast of the weapon, the Inspector General of the LNP released a social media broadcast demanding its immediate return, but the demand seemed to have been unanswered.

Consequently, according to Mr. Morlu, at about 2:00 AM on Saturday, July 18, 2026, a group of armed LNP officers surrounded his residence to have him arrested. Hence, he peacefully surrendered and was taken to court the same day.

According to Morlu, the presiding judge subsequently transferred the case back to the police for further investigation, after which he was released without charges. However, the LNP spokesperson informed the INCHR that Mr. Morlu was not unconditionally released, but rather released into the custody of his legal counsel pending the conclusion of an ongoing investigation.

The right of citizens to protest the government's action or inaction is a fundamental pillar of human rights and a vital component of a healthy civic space. This right is explicitly guaranteed under Article 17 of the Constitution of the Republic of Liberia (1986), Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and Article 11 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. While these domestic and international instruments obligate the State to respect, protect, and facilitate peaceful assembly, they also require citizens to exercise these rights strictly within the limits of the law.

Accordingly, the INCHR calls on the citizenry to fearlessly, without intimidation, exercise their fundamental rights to advocacy, protest, and free speech but to do so always within the confines of the law. Similarly, the Commission calls on all members of the security apparatus to observe and uphold the protection of fundamental rights and democratic principles. INCHR hastens to remind everybody that both the citizenry and the security actors will be legally accountable to preserve the sanctity, integrity, and accountability of both civil liberties and national security.

Signed:



Mohammed E. Fahnbullen
Acting Chairperson

