

# The Civil War and the Refugee Crisis in Liberia

Veronica Nmoma

Volume 17, numéro 1, spring 1997

URI : [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs17\\_01art05](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs17_01art05)

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

---

## Éditeur(s)

The University of New Brunswick

## ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)

1715-5673 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

---

## Citer cet article

Nmoma, V. (1997). The Civil War and the Refugee Crisis in Liberia. *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 17(1), 101–125.

**Vol. XVII No. 1, Spring 1997**

## **The Civil War and the Refugee Crisis in Liberia**

by *Veronica Nmoma*

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

On the eve of the twenty-first century, one of the greatest challenges and troubling phenomena facing the world is an increasing number of refugees, of whom there are about 18 million.<sup>1</sup> The refugee problem has recently assumed international significance due to exploding refugee population movements. The global refugee problem is a subject of international concern as it affects Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, and North America. It is a particularly serious problem in Africa where the refugee population on the continent represents about 50 percent of the world's refugees, surpassing even the population of some individual African nations. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Mozambique, Angola, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Rwanda, and Liberia have generated the largest numbers of refugees.

To date little has been written on the conditions of the Liberian refugees or displaced people. Scholars have neglected the movement and the conditions of the uprooted Liberians, notwithstanding the high numbers crossing daily into the neighboring African countries of Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Mali, Gambia and Nigeria. This article attempts to fill the vacuum in the literature on forced, internally displaced peoples and refugees (about 1.28 million or half of Liberia's population) that the Liberian civil conflict has caused. It contends that the aim of the Liberian revolution has long been lost as warring factions struggle for power and in the process has inflicted needless suffering among the innocent civilian populace they claim to represent. This study of the civil war and the refugee crisis in Liberia will focus on events between 1989-96.

### **AN OVERVIEW OF THE AFRICAN REFUGEE CRISIS**

Although refugees are not a new phenomenon in African history, the first major groups of African refugees stemmed from the colonial liberation struggles and subsequent dislocation. During the early 1960s, when most African colonies became independent, the number of refugees stood at 400,000. In 1970, it rose slightly to 750,000. However, by 1980, that number had exploded and reached the 5,000,000 mark, and at the end of 1993, Africa's refugee population climbed to nearly 6,000,000. Africa, the poorest continent, is indeed a region rife and replete with refugees.

What exactly do we mean by refugee? The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) describes a refugee as any person:

Who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of the country.<sup>2</sup>

To a large extent, refugees and displaced people in Africa are proof of political instability which may result from a breakdown in governance when "a people has become either a victim of their own government's abuse or that of an external aggressor, or coherent government has ceased to exist."<sup>3</sup> In 1969, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), taking into consideration the special refugee problems in Africa, expanded the UNHCR definition to include:

Every person, who owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality.<sup>4</sup>

Africa is not only faced with natural catastrophes, such as droughts and famine which produce economic refugees, but it is also afflicted with wars. Civil wars, ethnic strife, human rights abuses, coups and oppressive governments are the most important factors responsible for the large numbers of refugees on the continent. At present, African countries have become host to about 6 million refugees who have fled their countries mainly as a result of civil wars.<sup>5</sup> In recent years, massive population displacements have resulted from such civil conflicts. At times, the governments on which the inhabitants depend for law and order and support are themselves party to the internal conflict. As such, displaced people living within territories controlled by their own government have not been able to receive international relief that was not invited or allowed by their governments.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the experience of the refugee uprooted from his home or country is horrendous, as explained by one scholar:

No sound is more distressing than the plea of the homeless. Their cry expresses the pain of hunger, thirst, and disease, and denotes the fear of death, insecurity, and repression. The cry is not pretense, but a reflection of grim reality. It is an expression of tragedy occurring daily . . . especially in Africa where one of every two refugees resides.<sup>7</sup>

## **HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF LIBERIA'S PRE-WAR POLITICAL CONDITIONS**

A close analysis of the political conditions in pre-war Liberia provides insight into the refugee crisis. Liberia, about the size of Louisiana, was founded in 1822 by several US colonization societies supported by grants from the United States government. The two largest were the Maryland Colonization Society and the American Colonization Society. Driven by the abolitionist movement in the United States, Liberia was to serve as a place of refuge for freed American slaves.<sup>8</sup> When Britain declared slavery illegal and enforced the ban by its powerful anti-slavery naval patrols, Liberia and Sierra Leone also became the places where "recaptured" Africans taken from vessels involved in the Atlantic slave trade were settled by the British.<sup>9</sup>

Before the arrival of the settlers (Americo-Liberians), the territory now known as Liberia was an indigenous African socialist community. Civilization existed in the region prior to the arrival of the descendants of the settlers. The indigenous community had a government ruled by kings and village elders. Individuals were bound by institutional moral rules and laws, and stability was achieved through kinship and loyalty to the Poro society. The community enjoyed high standards of social and political organization with institutions resembling those of the great medieval empires of Western and Central Sudan, in particular, Mali and Songhay.<sup>[10](#)</sup>

Americo-Liberians comprised about 3 percent of Liberia's population during the early settler days. After the addition of "recaptured" Africans to the settlers, a new group emerged, akin to the Afrikaners of South Africa, called "Congos" by the indigenous Liberians. This group also assimilated indigenous coastal people mainly from the Bassa, Kru and Grebo and evolved into an elite, educated minority group. Before 1870, the Americo-Liberians had been characterized by light-skinned persons who professed Christianity and controlled the reins of power. Thus, no dark-skinned person had been president of the country. E.J. Roye, the founder of the True Whig Party, was the first dark-skinned president to break the color-bar of the lighter-skinned Liberians.<sup>[11](#)</sup>

The indigenous Africans consisted of several ethnic groups of which the largest are: Kpelle (298,500), Bassa (214,150), Gio (130,300), Mano (125,540), and Kru (121,400). Other smaller groups consist of: Grebo (108,099), Gola (106,450), Loma (60,840), Bandi (30,870), Kissa (25,500), Vai (24,000), Krahn (18,464), Mandingo (over 10,836), Del (7,900), and Belle (5,386).<sup>[12](#)</sup> The Bassa, Kru and Grebo are coastal "tribes" and were the first to encounter the early settlers. The Gola and Vai are close to the Sierra Leone border and, like the Mendi, are split between the two countries. The Mano and the Gio are interior "tribes" living on both sides of the border with the Cote d'Ivoire. The Krahn are split between Liberia and the Cote d'Ivoire. The Mandingo and Kpelle are found both in Guinea and Liberia.

The "tribal" Liberians were virtually colonized by the non-ethnic settlers or educated elite who considered them "primitive" or "heathens." The settlers took on the character of the slave masters and treated the indigenous population in like manner as they had experienced in slavery. They superimposed political, economic and social systems over the existing indigenous structures. With "tokenistic" education, the Africans were limited to nominal positions of no national social significance. Liberia's first president, Joseph Jenkins Roberts, kept most indigenous peoples from acquiring education in order to deter competition with the ruling elite class. He was in conflict with the protestant churchmen of Cape Palmas, "whom he accused of giving too much education to the Africans."<sup>[13](#)</sup> Indigenous Liberians that occupied prominent positions in the government before 1980 were those affiliated to Americo-Liberians either through marriage, birth or servitude.

The ruling Americo-Liberian class practiced a system of patronage and dominated the country's politics for over a century (from 1870 until the military coup in 1980). It controlled the government and economy, owning over 60 percent of the country's wealth. Until recently, for example, senior legislative, judiciary and executive positions were

retained by the elite families.<sup>14</sup> In order to maintain a firm control on the system, relatives and family members of President William Tubman (1947-71) and President William Tolbert (1971-80) were appointed to important, crucial and sensitive positions. Tolbert's brother, Stephen Tolbert was Secretary of Agriculture and Commerce in Tubman's administration, and Minister of Finance under Tolbert's. During Tubman's administration, his son, Shad Tubman Jr., was President of the Confederation of Trade Unions. Equally, in Tolbert's government, his son was the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, his son-in-law, Director of Budget, his cousin, Minister of Education, and his daughter, Assistant Minister of Education.<sup>15</sup>

This small, privileged Americo-Liberian class also were members of one political party. Since 1870, the country was ruled by this sole party, the True Whig Party. For about a century, all attempts to establish an opposition party as stipulated in the Liberian constitution failed. Indeed, the Whig Party itself represented a "club" of individuals who were prepared to uphold and advance the privileges enjoyed by the minority Americo-Liberians in the country. "All those who were not prepared to 'play the game' according to the rules of the Party were fenced out of the political, economic and social privileges that the elaborate patronage system could confer."<sup>16</sup> Dr. Togba-Na Tipoteh, budget advisor to President Tolbert and also Professor of Economics in the University of Liberia identified with the plight of the masses and indigenous Liberians and lost both positions because of his refusal to be co-opted.<sup>17</sup> President Tubman attempted to reverse some of the discriminatory policies toward the indigenous majority, but met with stiff resistance from the urban elite.<sup>18</sup> In this regard, Gus Liebenow noted:

The Americo-Liberian elite displayed an ambivalent political concern toward the involvement of tribal people in traditional forms of economic association. The involvement of tribal people in more modern forms of economic associations, on the other hand, was viewed with open hostility by the Whig leadership. In the absence of government support of cooperatives, the cash-crop economy was destined to remain under the control of foreign entrepreneurs and leaders of the Americo-Liberian class, with little competition from peasant cultivators.<sup>19</sup>

This indigenous, oppressed class (the "tribal people") have long felt that their labor in iron ore, lumber and rubber plantations had benefited chiefly the elite class. In fact, there is no doubt that the oppressive rule by the elite minority for over 160 years was instrumental in setting the stage for the civil crisis.<sup>20</sup> With an army of 5,000, of which more than 95 percent were "tribal,"<sup>21</sup> it seemed inevitable that the Liberian military coup would degenerate into a nightmare brought about by warring factions.

## **SAMUEL DOE'S APRIL 1980 MILITARY COUP AND ITS AFTERMATH**

The April 1980 coup, in which President Tolbert was assassinated, brought an end to the entrenched Americo-Liberian monopoly of power. As Okolo noted, Tolbert's attempt to suppress the opposition triggered the coup.<sup>22</sup> The opposition formed two revolutionary movements: the Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL) and the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA). PAL, a radical organization, was formed in 1975 by Liberian students in

the United States. It was determined to bring about a revolutionary change in Liberia by either violent or non-violent means. Like PAL, MOJA was a mass organization founded in 1973 in Liberia by students and professors of the University of Liberia. MOJA's objective was to raise the consciousness of workers, the urban unemployed, small cultivators, and students against Liberia's oppressive society.<sup>23</sup>

PAL was legalized as an opposition party in January 1980, and renamed the Progressive People's Party (PPP). The PPP was determined to compete against the government's True Whig Party in both the legislative and presidential elections that were scheduled for June 1980 and 1983 respectively. Tolbert's government attempted to frustrate the chances of the PPP.

Although the PPP frustrated and threatened the survival of the Tolbert's government, the real threat to Tolbert's administration occurred in April 1979, when his government announced a 50 percent increase in the price of rice, a national staple. This was followed by mass demonstrations against the price increase. The president called in his army and police, who opened fire on unarmed demonstrators, wounding about 400 people and killing between 40 and 140.<sup>24</sup> In another major act of opposition to the government, the PPP in 1980 called for a nationwide strike until the Tolbert government resigned. Its leader, Gabriel Baccus Mathews, charged that Tolbert's government had failed to provide a better economic life for Liberians.<sup>25</sup> In return, the administration arrested and detained leaders of the PPP charging them with treason. Months later, Sergeant Samuel Doe and his clique of non-commissioned officers of the Liberian army led a coup that overthrew Tolbert's government, thus, bringing an end to more than a century of True Whig Party dominance.<sup>26</sup> Doe carried out bloody purges within the military establishment, and the execution of 13 cabinet members of Tolbert's administration was televised on the country's national television.<sup>27</sup> Tolbert's body along with 27 members of his security force were dumped in a mass grave. Doe ordered all government officials who left before and after the April coup to return immediately and report to his government, or else face confiscation of properties in the country. However, in spite of Liberia's political problems, no large numbers of refugees were generated by the April coup.

Doe, on the other hand, was not very different from his predecessors. At first, his coup was welcomed by many Liberians. But his government's excessive violations of human rights, over-concentration of power, and rampant and uncontrolled corruption soon turned public opinion against him. His financial mismanagement left Liberia's treasury virtually empty, and nearly two billion dollars in debt.<sup>28</sup> Doe came from the Krahn group which makes up about 4 percent of the Liberian population.<sup>29</sup> He appointed some members of his ethnic group to senior government posts. Doe also recruited and promoted fellow Krahns within the armed force, which no doubt flared ethnic tensions within the army.<sup>30</sup> As Mr. Diggs, former Liberian Ambassador to Nigeria noted: "Every Krahn that was educated and aligned with Doe had a position in the government. In every office, Doe had a Krahn 'spy' who will approach you and say, 'Krahn by tribe; what is your tribe.' In fact, Krahn became almost the language of the governing circle in Liberia. If you did not speak Krahn, you are outside."<sup>31</sup> Along similar lines, Joyce contends that:



Doe's great mistake, and the one that has had the most lasting impact, was his "ethnicizing" of the armed forces. Krahn people were given most of the authority in the military and the most significant posts in the government. The armed forces became almost completely Krahn and behaved more like a faction than a national army. Doe divided ethnic groups as never before.<sup>32</sup>

There is no doubt that Doe's blatant discrimination and atrocities against other groups divided the country along ethnic lines. The Krahn dominated army was largely responsible for the atrocities and gross human rights violations committed during Doe's regime.<sup>33</sup> Following a failed coup attempt by Thomas Quiwonkpa (a Gio whose ethnic group lived mainly in Nimba county), Doe's ethnic hatred led his army to engage in bloody reprisals, torturing and killing about 2,000 Gio and Mano civilians in Monrovia, Liberia's capital. Hundreds of soldiers from these two ethnic groups were also executed. Doe's revenge was not limited to the perpetrators of the coup but was extended to thousands of innocent civilians.

The civil conflict in Liberia, the first in the country's nearly 170-year history, began on Christmas eve, 1989, when Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) launched an invasion through northern Liberia from bases in Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast).<sup>34</sup> Taylor's objective was to overthrow the 10 year-old corrupt and dictatorial rule of Doe.<sup>35</sup> His insurrection first started in Nimba, a county in north-eastern Liberia. In the first stage of the attack, Taylor and his NPFL limited their attacks to soldiers and government officials. However, Doe responded by mainly torturing, arresting and killing Gio and Mano civilians (the groups comprising most of Taylor's guerrilla support).<sup>36</sup> Members of these groups began fleeing into neighboring Guinea in December 1989. About 13,000 sought refuge in Guinea, only a week into the civil war.<sup>37</sup> Taylor's forces retaliated by attacking civilians of the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups.<sup>38</sup> By the beginning of 1990, as the war intensified in Nimba and surrounding areas, some 120,000 refugees had fled to Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea.<sup>39</sup>

Since 1989, the war has been largely a struggle for power among warring factions. What started as an attempt to oust Doe degenerated into ethnic massacres. The war fanned ethnic hatred as each faction fought with the desire to take revenge.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, the course of the rebellion has changed into unrestrained killings on a mass scale and the number of displaced persons and refugees number over a million. Unfortunately, the war was not primarily a fight among combatants but a major onslaught on the innocent civilian population. It is ironic that the rebel factions that claimed to want an end to the anarchy in Liberia caused by Doe's army have themselves been inflicting needless suffering on the civilian populace they claimed to represent. This is not only peculiar to Liberia but has happened also in Sudan, Somalia, Mozambique and Angola.

Due to internal squabbles, one faction split from Taylor's NPFL in February 1990 to become the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL). The INPFL headed by Prince Johnson competed with Taylor for the control of Liberia. As Taylor's rebel forces moved toward the capital, members of the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups as

well as those who served in Doe's administration became victims of reprisals. The world stood by and simply condemned the indiscriminate massacres.

Although the US remains the largest contributor of emergency aid to Liberia and its refugees, many Liberians are actually surprised and disappointed at the US, which was expected to intervene to stop the gruesome massacres and the flight of people to the neighboring countries. In view of the long-term ties between the two countries, many Liberians had expected US political or military intervention to end the civilian atrocities. Besides, they blame the US for supporting the Doe government, which came to power largely through electoral fraud, and repeatedly committed human rights abuses. In fact, in spite of the presence of four US warships and 2,100 marines stationed off the Liberian coast, the Bush administration chose to remain neutral in the conflict, following a "hands-off policy."<sup>41</sup> Instead, the US carried out a military evacuation of Americans and other foreign nationals caught in the conflict, while the population experienced excessive brutality from all fighting factions.

Finally, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) decided to step in after the US had rejected appeals for its intervention from the international community. ECOWAS' intervention was intended to stop the destruction and bloodshed, protect foreign nationals, separate the warring factions, restore peace in the war-torn country, and prevent instability in the West African region that could stem from the massive flow of refugees. Its member states were determined to find an African solution to the crisis. ECOWAS' peacekeeping force, ECOMOG (a five-nation West African military force from Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Gambia and Guinea), the vast majority of which were Nigerians, arrived in Monrovia in August 1990.

By 1990, Liberia was a nation divided, with two governments: the interim government of Amos Sawyer, a political scientist and former university dean (unrecognized by Taylor), and Taylor's National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government (NPRAG) in Gbarnga. As a result, ECOMOG's 8,000 men peacekeeping force along with Johnson's rebel INPFL and remnants of Doe's AFL army occupied Liberia's capital. At that time, Monrovia was protected by ECOMOG and it was the home of the interim government installed by ECOWAS. The rest of Liberia (about 95 percent) was mostly under the control of Taylor's NPFL. His faction controlled most of the country's economy and the interior.<sup>42</sup> However, during the course of the war, Taylor's holdings changed as other warring factions fought to capture new territories, defend old ones and re-capture lost lands. For example, ULIMO since 1992, and other forces that emerged in 1993 and 1994 reduced the territory under Taylor's control to 20 percent. The artificial division of the country was deemed to have ended upon the installation of the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG) in March 1994, and more so when the LNTG was replaced by a council mainly of factional leaders. Up until the end of 1996, the country was still divided into various guerrilla territories headed by rebel leaders. However, at present, the country is under ECOMOG's control.

## **THE REFUGEE CRISIS IN LIBERIA**



As the war moved closer to Monrovia, thousands of city dwellers fled through the Sierra Leonean border, while some escaped to Liberia's interior. With a few possessions, many of the uprooted began the month-long walk to Sierra Leone. ECOMOG and Prince Johnson's INPFL forces pushed Charles Taylor's NPFL rebels out of Monrovia in late 1990. About 100,000 civilians fled from the areas surrounding Monrovia into the capital, protected by ECOMOG. Many of the displaced moved in with relatives and friends and some resided in camps for displaced people. As a result, the population of Monrovia has more than doubled stemming from the surge of displaced persons looking for security.

Before the end of 1990, the war had left the economy shattered, homes and buildings looted and destroyed, and offices and businesses shut down. Monrovia had virtually no electricity or water services, jobs, or money. In fact, Monrovia's residents starved for months as fighting intensified in and around the capital. The wounded could not be rushed to receive treatment as clinics and hospitals were destroyed. Yet, in the melee ECOMOG managed to restore calm in Monrovia in October 1990, a month after Doe was captured and killed by a rebel faction of Prince Johnson's. By November 1990, the number of Liberian internal displaced people and refugees accounted for nearly one-third of the country's population.

As with other refugee situations in Africa, international response and assistance urgently needed was slow in coming and inadequate. As US Senator Edward Kennedy observed, "Liberia has become a casualty of the Persian Gulf War. A distracted world has ignored its suffering. It is one of the most critical and neglected humanitarian emergencies in the world today."<sup>43</sup> However, emergency food aid finally arrived in the capital beginning in the last quarter of 1990. Through a relief effort provided by the United Nations World Food Program, the population in Monrovia finally received food items that were distributed by the Special Emergency Life Food Program (known as Self), a local organization. The US, through its Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), also shipped food aid to Liberia.<sup>44</sup> The first of such shipments was the provision of over 87,000 tons of rice. By the end of 1990, all persons in the country were currently dependent on international food aid.<sup>45</sup>

In their attempt to get aid to refugees in neighboring countries, particularly to those in the forest region of Guinea, relief workers faced such climatic and logistical problems as heavy rains, bureaucratic delays, lack of transportation and fuel shortages. The refugees have tended to reside in the remote, least developed and difficult-to-reach areas in the country of asylum. In the case of Guinea, the refugee areas are about 600 miles from Conakry (Guinea's capital) where food shipments arrive.

Until aid arrived, Liberian refugees were welcomed by local people in neighboring states who provided them with food, shelter and other basic needs. Rather than live in camps, most of the refugees have been cohabiting with host families who willingly share their limited resources with the newcomers. The host governments have also been highly receptive to fleeing refugees and have adopted liberal asylum policies. Unfortunately, most of the African families that take in refugees are poor and often lack the resources to support their own families, let alone having to cope with an additional burden.

Before the fragile ceasefire in November 1990, hundreds of thousands of the uprooted lost all their belongings and some 50,000 persons lost their lives. War related disease and starvation accounted for the loss of many lives, children in particular.<sup>46</sup> Churches were not spared in the conflict either. In a move to prevent further killing, church leaders, representing the Liberian Council of Churches, requested Doe to relinquish power in the spring of 1990. The president threatened to have them tortured and then commanded his army to arrest and kill the clergy.<sup>47</sup> Magnus Amegashie, the Presbyterian Church's moderator, for example, was killed, while about 80 percent of the church leaders fled the country. Also executed by Doe's AFL soldiers were 600 refugees who sought refuge at St. Peter's Lutheran Church. The killing of refugees on holy grounds was a common practice among Doe's soldiers. Likewise, many of the 9,000 uprooted Liberians who sought refuge at the Baptist-run Ricks Institute were captured and massacred by Taylor's forces. The Armed Forces of Liberia on 30 July 1990, invaded, attacked and murdered hundreds of internally displaced refugees in a church serving as a Red Cross shelter.<sup>48</sup>

Refugee camps were equally invaded. Lacking physical security, Liberian displaced persons and refugees in shelters were vulnerable to physical abuse, and fell prey to torture and massacre. The AFL, the NPFL, the United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO), and the Liberian Peace Council (LPC),<sup>49</sup> engaged in human rights abuses and massacres of displaced persons and refugees in camps or shelters.<sup>50</sup> For example, in June 1993, at Harbel refugee camp outside Monrovia, the AFL rebels seized and slaughtered nearly 600 persons, wounding 500 and capturing and abducting 200.<sup>51</sup>

As a consequence, at the end of 1990, the civil war in Liberia had caused some 800,000 people to flee the country, while about a million persons were left homeless (one in five of the country's population had become homeless).<sup>52</sup> In the West African region in 1991, the refugee population grew to 875,000. The bulk of Liberian refugees fled in large numbers to Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Sierra Leone, while Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, and Gambia hosted smaller numbers. About 325,000 sought asylum in Guinea, 300,000 in Cote d'Ivoire, 125,000 in Sierra Leone, 8,000 in Ghana, and 1,500 in Nigeria.<sup>53</sup> Before the later part of 1991, about half of the country's inhabitants had fled to neighboring states or were internally displaced. Liberia (and Ethiopia) rank as the second largest generator of African refugees after Mozambique.<sup>54</sup> Also, Liberia, with about 2.5 million displaced people, is believed to have the highest number of refugees per capita in the world.<sup>55</sup>

Early in 1991, an all embracing ceasefire plan was agreed to by all factions at a meeting organized by ECOWAS in Lome, Togo. The Lome Accord supplemented the ceasefire agreement between Taylor's NPFL and Johnson's INPFL signed on 28 November 1990, in Bamako, Mali. The Lome meeting was held after "plans to flesh out the Bamako accord floundered in the mistrust, confusion and intransigence that followed a shift of focus to Monrovia."<sup>56</sup> The Lome agreement signed by the AFL, INPFL and NPFL contained a detailed plan for monitoring the ceasefire. It called for the disarmament and the encampment of the warring factions, which pledged to keep all their forces in their barracks. During the 20-month old ceasefire, life in Monrovia appeared to have returned to normal, with the malnutrition rate declining to two percent in early 1992 from

40 percent a year earlier.<sup>57</sup> As signs of normalcy returned to Liberia, people began coming back to Monrovia from refugee camps including those escaping from the areas controlled by Taylor in the middle of 1991. Approximately five to ten thousand refugees per week were returning to the capital, protected then by ECOMOG. Some 80,000 refugees were repatriated to Liberia by boat and land between 1991-92. Centers for displaced people in Monrovia became vacant as the situation began to normalize. However, the displaced continued to live with friends and relatives in overcrowded conditions, constituting a burden on those who barely could afford to help them. Some of the displaced and refugees relied on friends and relatives abroad for some financial support.<sup>58</sup> Many in Liberia have been displaced four or more times by the war.

The civil war has not only devastated the country but has had a major economic, social and political impact by overburdening the infrastructure and other social facilities. With nearly a million Liberian refugees in the West African region, this mass exodus has put enormous strain on the economies and the political situation in the countries hosting the refugees, Sierra Leone in particular. Unfortunately, the Liberian civil war threatened to become a regional conflict. The March 1991 incursion into Sierra Leone by Taylor's NPFL demonstrates the capacity of rebel forces to threaten and destabilize the security of the West African region. Upset that the Sierra Leonean government had allowed the country's airport to be used by ECOWAS to send troops and ammunition to Liberia, Taylor dispatched some of his army to invade Sierra Leone.<sup>59</sup> His NPFL forces engaged in combat with Sierra Leonean soldiers along the Liberian-Sierra Leonean border. On crossing the border into Sierra Leone, the rebel forces terrified and terrorized local inhabitants, looting and occupying towns in the east and northeast.

Aside from uprooting hundreds of thousands Sierra Leonean nationals, the incursion disrupted the relief program for about 125,000 Liberian refugees. President Joseph Momoh of Sierra Leone characterized Taylor's incursion as a means of destabilizing the neighboring country in retaliation for its involvement in ECOMOG. Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone once more became victims of the border clash between Taylor's NPFL and Sierra Leonean forces. Following these incidents, some thousands of Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone escaped the fighting in that country and returned to Liberia, while some, along with Sierra Leonean refugees, went to neighboring countries such as Guinea. As a result, some West African states not only bore the brunt of the Liberian refugees, but had to cope with uprooted third country nationals fleeing the war as well as the return of thousands of their own citizens who had lived and worked in Liberia. For example, Guinea officials had to contend with the return of some 80,000 of its citizens uprooted from Liberia and Sierra Leone, in addition to hundreds of thousands of Liberians and Sierra Leoneans seeking refuge in Guinea.

The incredible burden on the infrastructure and the meager resources of the West African countries caring for the refugees was especially felt during the Persian Gulf crisis, given that most of the Liberian refugees are in states already experiencing serious economic hardships. As many of the host countries are non-oil producing, they were particularly hard-hit by the economic costs of the Gulf crisis. According to estimates by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), every one dollar increase in the price of a barrel of

oil resulted in additional \$100 million to the annual fuel cost of the least developed African nations. For example, Ghana, a host country to the Liberian refugees and a non-oil producing state, had its fuel bill increase by an additional \$50-60 million in 1990, in spite of a stringent energy conservation measure.<sup>60</sup> With the exception of Cote d'Ivoire, the West African countries that have borne the burden of caring for the Liberian refugees Guinea, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Nigeria, and Ghana are listed in a World Bank study as low-income economies and as such among the poorest countries in the world.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, these host countries are unable to provide basic services for their own nationals.

In an effort to achieve a political solution to the 17 month-old-war that would be agreeable to all parties, United States Congressman Mervyn Dymally went to Liberia and urged that Sawyer and Taylor meet in Cote d'Ivoire to discuss the future of the country. UN and ECOWAS efforts led to the June 1991 Yamoussoukro 1 Conference in Yamoussoukro, the Ivorian political capital. Chaired by the late Cote d'Ivoire President, Houphouet-Boigny, the conference created a five-member committee (an adjunct to the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee) to work toward ending the stalemate in Liberia.

At the Second Yamoussoukro meeting held in July 1991, Taylor and Sawyer agreed to work toward peace and stability as a prerequisite for the conduct of elections. The five-man committee was charged with the task of monitoring the ceasefire and establishing an environment that would be conducive to free and fair elections. The committee was also to ensure that there would be freedom of movement to facilitate the repatriation and settlement of refugees.

Again, the committee of five met in Cote d'Ivoire (Yamoussoukro 111) on 16-17 September 1991 to resolve the thorny issue of the disarmament of former combatants. This resulted in an agreement to disarm the soldiers and encamp them under ECOMOG supervision. The accord also called for the creation of a five-member Elections Commission and a five-member Ad Hoc Supreme Court. ECOWAS members agreed to make a change in the character and composition of the peacekeeping force that would be representative of the 16 member nations of the organization. In addition, warring factions were required to cooperate with former US President Carter's International Negotiations Network (INN assists with the conduct and monitoring of multi-party elections as well as conflict resolution). Contrary to the agreements, however, Taylor continued to refuse to disarm his men, and opted to do so only under UN supervision. Repeatedly he had called for the replacement of ECOMOG peacekeepers with what he considered to be a neutral force, an African peacekeeping force or a UN force or both. Yet, his signature to all of the agreements did not lead to practical compliance.

Failing to achieve a political solution to the Liberian quagmire, another round of talks, Yamoussoukro IV, was held in Cote d'Ivoire in October 1991. The accord specifically spelled out the agenda for the disarmament and encampment of all warring groups to be accomplished within 60 days from 15 November as a first step toward the

repatriation and resettlement of refugees, in preparation for internationally supervised national elections slated for 30 November 1992.

However, plans for large-scale repatriation in 1992 broke down as fighting began between ULIMO, a new faction, and Taylor's NPFL. Thus, the ceasefire brokered by ECOWAS, which held for 20 months, collapsed in August of 1992, as ULIMO's forces pushed Charles Taylor's troops out of two southwestern counties. The situation further degenerated on 15 October as Taylor's NPFL attacked ECOMOG's positions in and around Monrovia. He accused ECOMOG of collaborating with ULIMO. The renewed fighting threatened the implementation of the 1991 Yamassoukro IV agreement and stalled the peace process. Taylor reneged on his pledge to the October 1991 accord, which would have allowed ECOMOG forces to disarm the NPFL forces of approximately 12,000 men, women and children. His October 1992 offensive attack on Monrovia was an attempt to oust the interim government installed by ECOWAS. To be sure, in the skirmishes, thousands lost their lives, and some 300,000 persons were displaced following the attack on Monrovia and ECOMOG's military response.<sup>62</sup>

ECOMOG in maintaining and enforcing their peacekeeping objectives became embroiled in Liberia's ongoing war. As Fleishchman noted: "With the NPFL attacks continuing, there was no peace to keep, ECOMOG was thrust into combat to push the NPFL out of Monrovia."<sup>63</sup> Sir Dawda Jawara, former ECOWAS Chairman and former Gambian head of state, explained that the:

strategy being pursued is still one of peace-keeping, but while especially in the first phase, the ECOMOG forces were reluctant even to fire back when attacked, now this has changed, because it is not practical for a peace-keeping force simply to fold its arms. Especially in the face of one of the factions still refusing to agree to a ceasefire, they are obliged to fire back and attack.<sup>64</sup>

The new fighting frustrated the hope of the refugees who had been returning to Liberia. It created some 100,000 new refugees from both Liberia and Sierra Leone and left 30,000 displaced within Liberia itself. While some refugees fled to Guinea, others continued to arrive in Monrovia whose population has more than doubled. The renewed fighting also frustrated UNHCR repatriation plans. An office in Monrovia had been set up to coordinate repatriation efforts. While refugees near the Liberian border were expected to return home on their own, others further away from the boundaries were to be provided with transportation. However, unable to reach a peaceful solution to the ongoing crisis, some 665,000 persons have been forced to remain in exile in neighboring states.

A meeting by ECOWAS members was convened in Benin in October 1992. Participant members agreed to impose sanctions on any factions which did not agree to a ceasefire in compliance with the Yamoussoukro IV peace plan. ULIMO and NPFL forces were given 15 days to comply with the agreement or face a total blockade "of all entry points into Liberia by land, air and sea."<sup>65</sup> The objective was to prevent the importation of military arms and equipment into Liberia and the exportation of any goods from the country. ECOWAS approached the UN seeking the imposition of similar international sanctions



against Liberia. The UN approved Resolution 788, which imposed an arms embargo on the Liberian warring factions as the crisis threatened international peace and security. Resolution 788 forbade the delivery of weapons and military equipment to Liberia, but did not apply to ECOMOG. The embargo imposed in November 1992 was enforced by ECOMOG's 15,000 African peacekeepers. In August 1993, ECOWAS imposed economic sanctions in the areas controlled by the NPFL in an attempt to enforce compliance with the disarmament and the encampment of the warring forces.<sup>66</sup>

As of December 1992, the number of Liberians internally displaced totalled some 600,000. Both the displaced and the refugees have lived in endless fear and shock as they have endured severe hardship. They have been subjected to the most brutal forms of inhuman treatment by the combatants. Although some ECOMOG soldiers are said to have been involved in looting, detention of civilians, and air strikes on hospitals (in attempt to impose UN sanctions), it is generally agreed that "ECOMOG has not been responsible for systematic human rights abuses in the territory it controls."<sup>67</sup> However, all the Liberian warring factions engaged in torture, rape, mutilations and murder. As Hiram Ruiz reported,

Survivors described not just physical abuse, rape, and wanton killing, but also mutilations, people forced to eat their own body parts, the sick and elderly burned alive in their huts, and pregnant women's stomachs torn open with bayonets and their unborn babies ripped from their wombs. Men, women, and children were forced to watch the torture and execution of their loved ones. Anyone who protested or even cried out risked being killed.<sup>68</sup>

The war has left thousands of children orphaned and separated from their parents. While some have been killed, others have died from starvation and hunger. Still others were conscripted as children's militia. Taylor recruited 10 year-olds and had them drugged before being sent to the battle front. Indeed, children soldiers reported that "they are often given drugs or alcohol by their commanders; and they described taking such things as a mixture of cane juice and gunpowder, marijuana, and 'bubbles,' an amphetamine, to make them strong and brave. Many of the small soldiers said that they were given drugs before going into battle, sometimes instead of food."<sup>69</sup>

Three hundred orphans seized in Chocolate city were forced to carry arms along with Taylor's troops. Children soldiers under 15 make up about 10 percent of the combatants in Liberia's civil war. With the exception of the Armed Forces of Liberia, nearly all the various warring factions used children soldiers, and consequently, children became victims and perpetrators of atrocities.<sup>70</sup> While many of the children soldiers have been conscripted, some have joined voluntarily to avenge the massacre of their parents, siblings or relatives, and others joined the war because their parents were killed and enlisting was the only option. The children soldiers have been taught how to kill, loot, and commit various atrocities. Some of the survivors tell of their gruesome experiences. A nine year-old boy revealed to UNICEF: "The freedom fighters, they cut people's throats in front of me." Likewise, a 13 year-old youngster thus recounted his horrific experience: "My mother and my father were killed by the government soldiers. I was



there when my mother and my father were killed." And a 15 year-old said, "I was stabbed in the stomach in Nimba by NPFL forces after they killed my sister."<sup>71</sup>

At the end of 1993, the total number of Liberian refugees soared to about 702,000. Of this number, 250,000 were estimated to be living in Cote d'Ivoire, 420,000 in Guinea, 13,000 in Ghana, 15,000 in Sierra Leone and 4,000 in other countries. As the situation seemed to improve, some 7,000 Liberian refugees left Ghana and returned to Liberia during the latter part of 1993. The remaining 13,000 resided at a UNHCR camp near Ghana's capital, Accra. Many Liberian refugees have been made powerless and helpless in exile in surrounding countries. They await the end of a seemingly never ending conflict in their country.

With the disarmament and demobilization process delayed, and with the likelihood of fighting intensifying between the ULIMO and NPFL forces, the UN and ECOWAS committee held a summit in Geneva, Switzerland to discuss the Liberian situation. UN and ECOWAS efforts resulted in the Geneva Accord, which was rubber stamped a week later at the ECOWAS 16th Annual Summit at Cotonou, Benin. This new agreement has been referred to as the Geneva and the Cotonou Accord. The 17 July 1993 agreement was to take effect beginning 1 August 1993. The Geneva conference allowed the two warring participants, ULIMO, NPFL, and representatives of the interim government, IGNU, to engage in a face-to-face dialogue and negotiation. The peace plan called for the establishment of a UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) and a reconstituted African peacekeeping force (subsequently, Senegal, Uganda and Tanzania contributed troops). The UN, in conjunction with ECOMOG, was to supervise and monitor the agreement. Demilitarization and repatriation plans were to precede national elections in September 1994. Furthermore, a new interim government, the LNTG, comprising representatives from ULIMO, IGNU and NPFL was to govern Liberia prior to the 1994 elections. The UN affirmed the Yamassoukro 1V Accord as offering the "best foundation for a lasting peace in Liberia and the West African sub-region."<sup>72</sup>

In line with the Geneva and the Cotonou Accords, Liberian armed factions began turning in their weapons in February 1994, in preparation for multi-party elections slated for 7 September 1994. Between 25,000 and 60,000 fighters were to be disarmed by African peacekeepers in coordination with some 360 UN military observers. In March 1994, the LNTG was sworn in. Members from this new administration included representatives of the former Interim Government of National Unity, ULIMO and Taylor's NPFL. The UN military observer mission along with African peacekeepers (some 1,700 soldiers from Tanzania and Uganda joining the estimated 12,000 ECOMOG forces in Liberia) began enforcing the disarmament and demobilization program as called for in the July 1993 peace accord.

A center for demobilization and disarmament was put in place, and already 2,845 soldiers had been demobilized as early as May 1994.<sup>73</sup> In the demobilization center, the ex-soldiers were supplied with cooking items and other necessary materials, while others were put to work on community development projects. Children soldiers estimated at 6,000 were expected to be demobilized. The agreement also mandated that all warring

factions "create conditions that will allow all refugees and displaced to, respectively, voluntarily repatriate and return to Liberia to their places of origin."<sup>74</sup>

In spite of the accords, Liberia's nearly five year-old civil war re-ignited, as a new round of fighting between rival guerrilla splinter groups began in early September 1994. The fighting occurred between the Krahn and Mandingo elements within ULIMO, as well as between ULIMO and the Lofa Defense Force (LDF a new rebel faction that emerged toward the end of 1993, and was believed to be a surrogate group of the NPFL, which has denied any connection or involvement with the LDF). Also engaged in skirmishes were the LPC and the NPFL. Some 100,000 persons were uprooted in renewed fighting. About 50,000 of the refugees fled to Guinea and 90,000 to Cote d'Ivoire. Most of the fleeing refugees took no personal belongings, while some crossing into Cote d'Ivoire by canoe drowned in their desperate efforts. Relief workers were unable to reach thousands of the internally displaced stranded in Liberia's war zones. The death toll, however, has been high. It is estimated that by the middle of 1994, approximately one in every 17 persons had died in the protracted civil conflict, while 75 percent of the Liberian people were uprooted from their homes.<sup>75</sup>

With the escalation of ULIMO infighting and continued skirmishes between the factions and the failure of disarmament and demobilization, the Cotonou Accord was amended. A new agreement, the Akosombo Accord, approved by the UN, was signed in Ghana by the three main warring groups (Taylor's NPFL, Alhaji Kromah's Madingo wing of ULIMO and General Hezekiah Bowen's AFL) in mid-September 1994. The accord ceded power to the three main rebel factions as its provisions called for a council of faction leaders to replace the civilian dominated LNTG that took effect in March 1994.<sup>76</sup> The UN was concerned about the "limited Progress" made in the peace negotiations and the disarmament process. Therefore, it was convinced that giving control of the government to armed forces may quicken disarmament. Along this line, Ghanaian Deputy

Foreign Minister, Mohammed Chambers, expressed the UN and ECOWAS position. Explaining why Cotonou stalled, Chambers contended that

the fact is that disarmament did not happen as we anticipated and there should be no doubt whatsoever that in order to achieve effective disarmament one has to engage and deal directly with leaders who, in the first instance, [are] the various armed groups, various factions and their followers; this is what Akosombo sought to do to involve these factional leaders directly, engage them in the quest for peace and thereby commit them to disarming their various groups.<sup>77</sup>

Because many Liberians were not pleased with this particular provision of the new accord, three days later, a new rebel faction under the command of General Charles Julue, led an armed coup attempt and invaded the presidential palace. Julue subsequently claimed to be in control of the country. However, the coup was short-lived as African peacekeeping troops dislodged the rebels.

By the end of 1994, Taylor's NPFL was weakened considerably and only controlled 20 percent of Liberia. Also, at year's end, of Liberia's approximate 2.3 million people, over 700,000 sought refuge in the surrounding countries, and 1.8 million persons were displaced. And of the number uprooted, 1.3 million lived in areas secured by ECOMOG.<sup>78</sup>

In 1995, the number of warring factions continued to burgeon. Throughout the course of the six year-old war some twelve peace accords and numerous ceasefire agreements have been signed only to be broken. Most of the rebel leaders senselessly prolonged the war, fought for the sake of looting and killing, often with no specific ideology. In the middle of 1995, the gruesome factional fighting temporarily spilled into Cote d'Ivoire at the border town of Tai. At least 20 Liberian refugees and ten Ivorians were killed. This incident provoked a revenge attack by some Ivorian police and civilians resulting in the deaths of some 200 Liberian refugees.<sup>79</sup> As a result of the continued fighting in Liberia in 1995, about 7,000 new refugees arrived in Guinea, and in the Cote d'Ivoire the number of new refugees soared to 50,000. In the West African region therefore, the total number of Liberian refugees in 1995 rose to 400,000 in Guinea, in Cote d'Ivoire some 290,000, 15,000 in Ghana, 15,000 in Sierra Leone and 5,000 in Nigeria.<sup>80</sup> Some one million Liberians were internally displaced. As the situation appeared to improve, UNHCR assisted some 6,817 refugees in Guinea to return by air to Monrovia. In December, several thousand refugees returned by crossing the Liberia-Guinea border.

The thirteenth peace accord was signed in Abuja, Nigeria in August 1995. The Abuja agreement raised the hopes of the refugees that at last the war might be over and large-scale repatriation efforts might begin. However, fighting was reported in western Liberia and around Gbarnga, with accounts of sporadic outbreaks of fighting in December 1995, and a second in mid-January 1996. The outbreak of fighting threatened the Abuja agreement, which led to the installation of a new ruling council comprised of three faction leaders and three civilians on 1 September 1995.<sup>81</sup>

For a time Monrovia appeared to have returned to normal life. However, the brutality that has characterized the senseless civil war again unravelled in April 1996, as factional fighting between the forces of Taylor and Rosevelt Johnson (ULIMO-Krahn) engulfed the capital. The new fighting was sparked by an attempt by Taylor's men to arrest Johnson, a rival, on murder charges. Once again, the carnage continued with its attending toll. More than 3,000 persons were killed, and some 60,000 displaced and many fled Liberia crossing into neighboring countries. The renewed fighting also sent thousands of refugees packed in cargo ships searching for asylum in other countries. Some of the ships carrying refugees, like the Russian *Zolotitsa* with some 450 passengers and the Nigerian *Bulk Challenge* with some 2,000 Liberian refugees, were stranded at sea as they were turned away repeatedly from West African ports. With no end in sight, it appeared the patience of the refugee receiving countries is waning, as many are experiencing high inflation, unemployment, and poverty, in addition to the political security threat posed by the presence of the refugees. The US government evacuated some 500 Americans and about 1,000 foreign nationals from the capital.

With limited progress made in the disarmament and demobilization process, West African leaders at the ECOWAS Summit of the Committee of Nine on Liberia held in August 1996 extended the August 1995 Abuja agreement, now called the Abuja II Accord. The committee also appointed a former Liberian Senator, Ruth Perry, to effectively replace the inefficient Wilton Sinkhole as Chairman of the six-member ruling Council of State. In line with the August 1996 Extended Abuja Accord, the disarmament and demobilization program began on 22 November 1996 and was expected to be completed by 31 January 1997. Equally, all factions would cease to exist on that date. The country is currently under the control of ECOMOG and no one but the peacekeepers can carry weapons. Complete disarmament and demobilization is expected to pave the way for national elections scheduled for May 1997. The long awaited disarmament is crucial to repatriating refugees from the neighboring countries.

In preparation for the elections, UNHCR is expected to facilitate the return of refugees from the surrounding countries. Refugees remaining in the neighboring nations would have to return to Liberia in order to participate in the registration and voting process. Many refugees are anxious to return to their homes but are skeptical until the guns are gone. According to one refugee, Musa Dagoseh, "I will . . . return home the day God helps them to disarm. It is only the guns that are keeping me here." Another refugee who lost his wife and children at the beginning of the war in 1990 will forgive the combatants when they surrender their weapons to ECOMOG. As Edwin Fahnbulleh said, taking the guns from the warriors "will afford us the opportunity to once again have peace, regain our freedom, and find food for ourselves."<sup>82</sup> The long drawn out conflict had at the end of 1996 claimed more than 160,000 lives, over 200,000 persons displaced and produced nearly a million refugees in surrounding countries. For ECOWAS, the seven year-old war has not only cost hundreds of millions of dollars but also the lives of many peacekeepers. However, Nigeria, ECOMOG's main source of resources is determined to maintain the peace in Liberia long enough for the May 1997 national elections.

## CONCLUSION

Taylor's professed goal was to end the corrupt and dictatorial rule of Doe. However, Doe's death in September 1990 did not pave the way for an end to the Liberian civil war. In the final analysis, the aim of the Liberian rebellion was lost as Taylor and the other warring factions embarked on a campaign of terror against the innocent civilian population they claimed to represent. The war shifted from one of revolution to a war of genocide. Civilians, therefore, suffered most and were killed in far greater numbers than combatants. They were subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention, harassment, torture, rape, mutilation, and executions. Children were no exceptions. The use of children soldiers under the age of fifteen became an unfortunate characteristic of this conflict. Children were drugged instead of being fed before going to the battlefield. The Protocols of the Geneva Conventions, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the African Charter on the Rights of the Child forbid the use of children under age fifteen and, in the case of the latter convention, under age eighteen. The armed factions, in particular, ULIMO and the NPFL, demonstrated complete reckless disregard for the rights of the child. As many African observers contend, "Taylor's flagrant disregard for

human rights and the despotic nature of his rule lie at the root of the troubles in Liberia."<sup>83</sup>

There is no doubt that the war has been fueled by ethnic animosity and individual struggles for power, while ignoring the national interest. Yet, Taylor claims he wishes to ensure peace and security to Liberia by ending the crisis. However, in accord after accord (Bamako, Lome, Yamoussoukro II, Yamoussoukro III, Yamoussoukro IV, Geneva, and Cotonou), Taylor repeatedly refused to disarm his forces as a step toward the repatriation and the resettlement of refugees in preparation for elections. By repeatedly refusing to call on his forces to lay down their weapons as the other factions had agreed to, coupled with his poor human rights record, his image was tarnished among Liberians (whose support he won at the initial stage of the conflict) as well as among regional and world leaders.

Meanwhile, Liberia's seven year-old civil war has claimed more than 160,000 lives, leaving more than half of its 2.5 million people displaced and refugees in West African countries. The situation in the country became increasingly complex as more and more splinter groups joined the war, thereby perpetuating the brutal conflict and frustrating any possible political solution. Regrettably, Liberia appeared to be making little or no progress toward an election in 1996.

However, at last, in August 1996, the parties to the Liberian civil conflict signed perhaps a lasting peace agreement the Abuja II Accord that may bring a political solution to the war-torn country. The latest Abuja II Accord is believed to be Liberia's last best hope. Unless the Abuja II Accord is adhered to, the war in Liberia will linger for years to come and the plight of the displaced and the refugees will most likely worsen. Sadly enough, Liberia has allowed experience to be a brutal teacher in its refusal to be one nation, one people. Liberians as Somah noted, "are the ones to bring peace, stability, and hope to Liberia."<sup>84</sup>

Although Liberia is first and foremost an African problem, as expressed by former Tanzanian President, Julius Nyerere,<sup>85</sup> Liberia's homeless, displaced people, and the powerless refugees will need generous financial and material assistance from the African nations as well as the international community to repatriate and rehabilitate them and to reconstruct the country. Realistically speaking, the continent cannot handle and support the millions of refugees it has generated over the decades. Indeed, the Liberian conflict has been a very costly affair in lives, resources and manpower. Nigeria alone, for example, spent over \$400 million just in the early years of the conflict.<sup>86</sup> The ECOWAS member countries have largely born the bulk of the expenses in support of the peacekeeping operation. The war has seriously strained the meager resources of the African governments involved in the crisis. With many African nations ranking as low-income economies (listed among the poorest countries in the world) and with the intensification of civil wars, the continent faces a serious problem that of handling its refugees.

Hoping that the extended Abuja ceasefire agreement will hold, plans are underway for the repatriation and resettlement of refugees. Taylor and Alhaji Kromah are attempting to transform their armed movements into political parties, thereby forsaking the need to seize power through the power of the gun. This may be a demonstration that the warring factions are ready for peace. When and if a national election is held in May, Liberians might or might not elect a leader that is capable of healing the wounds of war. Thus, the situation will most likely remain volatile for some time. As a former Liberian Ambassador, Lafayette Diggs, warned:

If we fail to heed the lessons of the past we will once again throw our people to the tender mercies of the latent Does and Idi Amins now lining up for leadership of a weak and helpless Liberia. We must pay close attention and examine carefully all candidates aspiring to the leadership of the new Liberia and stifle quickly those persons showing any of the terrible personality traits of a ruthless leader before they can come to power and take undue advantage of our people. Never again must we have the cult of the personality when the leader can do no wrong and must instill fear into the people in order to maintain power.<sup>87</sup>

### Endnotes

1. For more on this, see the Report on the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, General Assembly. *Official Records: Forty-Eighth Session Supplement No. 12A* (New York: United Nations, 1994). For other relevant works, see Hugh C. Brooks and Yassin El-Ayouty, eds., *Refugees South of the Sahara: An African Dilemma* (Westport, CT: Negro University Press, 1970); Bill Frelick, "Preventing Refugee flows: Protection or Peril?" *1993 World Refugee Survey* (Washington DC: United States Committee for Refugees, 1993), pp. 5-13; Sven Hamrell, "The Problem of African Refugees," in Sven Hamrell, ed., *Refugee Problems in Africa* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1967), pp. 9-25; P. Hartling, "Africa Viewed as Continent of Refugee Problems," *UN Chronicle*, 18 May 1981, pp. 42-43; M. S. Kenzer, ed., "Global Refugee Issues at the Beginning of the 1990s," *Canadian Geography*, 35 (Summer 1991), pp. 189-202; Apollo Kironde, "An African Evaluation of the Problem," in Brooks and El-Ayouty, eds., *Refugees South of the Sahara*, pp. 107-14; R. Rogers, "The Future of Refugee flows and Policies," *International Migration Review*, 26 (Winter 1992), pp. 112-43; and Christopher William, "End of an Epoch: The Tolbert-Doe Transition in Liberia," *TransAfrica Forum*, (Winter 1988), pp. 27-38.
2. Michael J. Schultheis, "Refugees in Africa: The Geopolitics of Forced Displacement," *Africa Studies Review*, 32 (April 1989), p. 8.
3. Roger P. Winter, "The Year in Review," *1993 World Refugee Survey*, (Washington DC: US Committee for Refugees [USCR], 1993), p. 2.
4. Schultheis, "Refugees in Africa," p. 8.



5. Arthur Helton, "Refugees: the Kindness of Strangers," *Africa Report*, (March-April 1994), p. 33.
6. Winter, "Year in Review," pp. 2-19.
7. Jack C. Miller, "The Homeless of Africa," *Africa Today*, 29 (1982), p. 5.
8. Not more than 5,000 blacks were ever repatriated to Liberia from the United States before the Civil War. After the Civil War and Emancipation, it was no longer necessary and blacks did not want to leave America for Africa.
9. There were three slave trade routes from Africa. The trans-Saharan, the East African and the Atlantic. The Atlantic trade route served the Brazilian, Caribbean and United States markets.
10. Basil Davidson, *A History of West Africa 1000-1800* (London: Longman, 1981), pp. 8-9; A. Doris Henries, *The Liberian Nation* (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1966), pp. 249-50; and J. Gus Liebenow, *Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1969), pp. 4-205.
11. See George Klay Kieh, Jr., "Setting the Stage: Historical Antecedents to the April 12, 1980 Coup d'Etat in Liberia," *Liberian Studies Journal*, XIII, (1988), pp. 203-6.
12. Harold D. Nelson, *Background Notes: Liberia* (Washington, DC: US Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Office of Public Communication, 1987), p. xiv. See also Christopher Clapham, "Liberia: Physical and Social Geography," in *Africa South of the Sahara 1995* (London: Europa Publications, 1994), p. 527; D. Elwood Dunn and Svend E. Holsoe, *Historical Dictionary of Liberia* (London: Scarecrow, 1985), pp. 1-192.
13. George H. Nubo, "From the Ashes of Civil War: The Policy of Educational Neglect," *The Perspective*, 1 (December 1996-January 1997), pp. 2-3.
14. J. Gus Liebenow, *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987). Liebenow's writings about Liberia have been challenged as being anecdotal and impressionistic political journalism. See Carl P. Burrowes, *The Americo-Liberian Ruling Class and Other Myths: A Critique of Political Science in the Liberian Context* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University, Institute of African and African-American Affairs, Department of African-American Studies, 1989).
15. M. A. Vogt, ed., *The Liberian Crisis and ECOMOG: A Bold Attempt at Regional Peace Keeping* (Lagos, Nigeria: Gabumo, 1992), pp. 29-48.
16. Ibid., pp. 33-45.
17. Ibid.

18. S.A. Akintoye, *Emergent African States: Topics in Twentieth Century African History* (London: Longman, 1977), pp. 159-60.
19. Liebenow, *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy*, pp. 71-73.
20. J. Gus Liebenow, "The Liberian Coup in Perspective," *Current History*, 80 (March 1981), pp. 101-4; "Military, Civilians Rule Liberia after Coup," *Africa Report*, (May-June 1980), p. 24.
21. Lafayette Diggs, "The Praise of Mediocrity," a paper delivered at the Third National Convention of the United Bassa Organization, Charlotte NC, 29 May 1993.
22. See Julius Okolo, "Liberia: The Military Coup and its Aftermath," *The World Today*, 37 (April 1981), p. 152.
23. Ibid., p. 152.
24. Liebenow, "The Liberian Coup in Perspective," p. 104.
25. Kieh, "Setting the Stage," pp. 207-12. See also "Military, Civilians Rule Liberia after Coup," p. 23.
26. The Chief of Staff of the army at the time of the coup was General Korboi Johnson, a Lorma, trained in the United States at the US General Staff College. Not a single senior officer was linked to the 1980 coup. General Johnson is now a refugee in the United States.
27. Fay Willey, "Sergeant Doe's Death Squad," *Newsweek*, 95 (5 May 1980), p. 64. Also, J. Gus Liebenow, *African Politics: Crises and Challenges* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 257.
28. Bruce W. Nelan, "The Would-Be President," *Time*, 382 (1993), pp. 55-56.
29. Dunn and Holsoe, *Historical Dictionary*, pp. 1-192.
30. Amos Sawyer, *The Emergence of Autocracy in Liberia: Tragedy and Challenge* (San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies Press, 1992), pp. 5-15.
31. Interview with Diggs, former Liberian Ambassador to Nigeria on 10 January 1997.
32. James F. Joyce, "Madness in Monrovia: What Led to the Liberian Bloodbath," *Commonweal*, 123 (June 1996), p. 9-11.
33. William O'Neil, "Liberia: An Avoidable Tragedy," *Current History*, 92 (May 1993), pp. 213-15.

34 Taylor received his degree in Economics from Betley College, Waltham, Massachusetts. He subsequently returned to Liberia to head one of Doe's government agencies charged with the management and distribution of funds to the various ministries. Taylor, along with two others, were accused subsequently of embezzling \$900,000. He escaped to the US in 1984 where he was later arraigned pending extradition. After 18 months in a corrections facility in Massachusetts, Taylor escaped, flew out of the US and resided in a few African countries, one being Cote d'Ivoire. Although Taylor invaded Liberia from bases in Cote d'Ivoire, the core of his army was trained in Libya and Burkina Faso. For more on this, see Ruby Ofori, "A Decade of Doe," *West Africa*, (16-22 April 1990), p. 610; and Bernadette Cole, "Behind the Rebel Incursions into Sierra Leone: Taylor's Hand," *West Africa*, (12-18 August 1991), p. 591.

35. James Butty, "A Year of Terror," *West Africa*, (7-13 January 1991), p. 3149; "Government Accused of Abuses," *Africa News*, 33 (26 February 1990), p. 7; *1991 World Refugee Survey* (Washington DC: The US Committee for Refugees, 1994), p. 45.

36. As Ellis argued:

Arriving in Nimba County, the AFL (Doe's army) carried out collective punishments against local villages, killing, looting and raping, singling out people from the Gio and Mano ethnic groups whom they regarded as supporters of the invasion by reason of their ethnic identity alone. There was already a history of enmity between Doe's own Krahn, on the one hand, and the Gio and Mano on the other, resulting from the politics of the military after the 1980 coup, which had already led to bloodshed in 1985.

See Stephen Ellis, "Liberia 1989-1994: A Study of ethnic and Spiritual Violence," *African Affairs*, 94 (April 1990), pp. 165-87.

37. Hiram A. Ruiz, *Liberia: Destruction and Reconstruction* (Issue Brief) (Washington DC: USCR, 1990), p. 7.

38. The Mandingos are another ethnic group largely muslims and traders, and regarded as supporters of the Doe government. Following Taylor's attack on Butuo in December 1989, Alhaji G. V. Kromah, Doe's Assistant Minister of Information, encouraged his Mandingo ethnic group to support Doe's forces. This proved fatal to many Mandingos. Equally, as Taylor's forces approached the outskirts of Monrovia in 1990, Doe armed both the Krahn and Mandingo civilians in the capital. See "Liberia: a Human Rights Disaster," *Africa Watch*, (New York, 1990), pp. 26-28. Also Ellis, "Liberia 1989-1994," pp. 165-80.

39. Hiram A. Ruiz, *Uprooted Liberians: Casualties of a Brutal War* (Issue Paper) (Washington DC: USCR, 1992), p. 5.

40. Although the civil crisis did not begin as a conflict among the ethnic groups, "it has now gathered enough destructive energy to maintain the violence." See Daniel Olson, "History and Hope: Liberia's Battle," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 9 October 1996.

Following Taylor's 1989 invasion, his NPFL forces looted and killed many belonging to the Krahn ethnic group. ULIMO, an anti-Taylor organization, split mainly along ethnic lines in 1994 (Ulimo-Khran and Ulimo-Mandingo) after months of tension between rival groups. Following the Cotonou Peace Accord, many of the forces that evolved were increasingly ethnicized. Examples would include the Liberian Peace Council and the Lofa Defence Force. Although Taylor's forces were mostly Manos and Gios, his financial support at the beginning came mainly from Americo-Liberians abroad. Doe's AFL was largely Krahn dominated. Equally, most of the faction leaders in an attempt to establish a political constituency cultivated an ethnic base. See Joyce, "Madness in Monrovia," pp. 9-11; and Ellis, "Liberia 1989-1994."

41. Cited in Veronica Nmoma, "The Civil Crisis in Liberia: An American Response," *The Journal of African Policy Studies*, 1 (1995), pp. 71-78.

42. The interim government came into existence in November 1990, following ECOWAS' sponsorship of a Liberian National Conference in Banjul, Gambia in August 1990. Members of the conference were comprised of Liberian political, civil and professional groups in exile. In a secret ballot this group selected Sawyer and others to form an interim government until Liberians would elect a permanent government.

43. "Half of Liberia Displaced, U.S. Report Says," *The New York Times*, 11 February 1991, A5.

44. Organizations providing emergency assistance and services to the Liberian refugees include: United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Program in conjunction with UNICEF, the League of the Red Cross, National Red Cross Societies, Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders), as well as governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The UNHCR contribution in 1990 to the care and maintenance programs for Liberian refugees who fled into neighboring countries were as follows: Guinea, \$9.8 million, Cote d'Ivoire, \$5.8 million, and Sierra Leone, \$2.4 million. Other monies were also provided for emergency relief assistance for special programs for the Liberian refugees in the aforementioned three most affected areas. *Report of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, Supplement No. 12* (New York: United Nations Publications, 1991), p. 9. In 1991 some \$290.9 million was spent by the UNHCR, split between general and special programs.

45. Ruiz, *Liberia: Destruction and Reconstruction*, p. 1.

46. "Churches Bring Relief to Devastated Liberia," *The Christian Century*, 18-25 September 1991, pp. 853-58.

47. Ibid., p. 854.

48. Ruiz, *Liberia: Destruction and Reconstruction*, p. 1.

49. Ulimo was formed in June 1991, and was made up of the remnants of Doe's forces who had fled to Sierra Leone. It operated from a base in neighboring Sierra Leone. Its forces pushed Taylor's army from some of the territories he controlled in the southwestern part of the country. The Liberian Peace Council appeared after the signing of the Cotonou Accord in July 1993. It is largely from the Krahn group and was created by former AFL soldiers.

50. See "Waging War to Keep the Peace: Ecomog Intervention and Human Rights," (Washington DC: Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1993); and *Human Rights Abuses by the Liberian Peace Council and the Need for International Oversight* (Washington DC: Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1994).

51. Peter Da Costa, "Another Plan for Peace" *Africa Report*, 38 (September/October 1993), pp. 20-23.

52. Rick Wells, "The Lost of Liberia," *Africa Report*, 35 (November-December 1990), p. 21.

53. See the *Report of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, Supplement No. 12*, p. 19.

54. See Princeton N. Lyman's Statement before the Subcommittee on Africa, in "Crisis in Liberia: The Regional Impact," Washington DC, 16 July 1991, pp. 11-16.

55. Cindy Shiner, "Liberian Rebels Hamper Relief Delivery," *The Washington Post*, 21 August 1993, A17.

56. Peter da Costa, "Moving Toward Peace," *West Africa*, (25 February-3 March 1991), p. 262.

57. Robert M. Press, "Liberian Government, Rebels Locked in Stalemate," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 4 March 1992, pp. 10-11.

58. Ruiz, *Issue Paper*, pp. 10-11.

59. Cindy Shiner, "Refugees Return after Harrowing Treks," *Africa News*, (26 April - 9 May 1993), p. 2.

60. See "Gulf Costs Drain Africa," *Africa News*, 34 (21 January 1991), pp. 5-6.

61. "Development and Environment," (Washington DC: The World Bank, 1992), pp. 218 .

62. *1994 World Refugee Survey* (Washington DC: USCR, 1994) p. 58.

63. Janet Fleischman, "An Uncivil War," *Africa Report*, 38 (May/June 1993), pp. 57-59.

64. Kay Whiteman, "Towards Peace in Liberia," *West Africa*, (26 November-2 December 1990), p. 2895.
65. Binaifer Nowrojee, "Taylor Launches Offensive in Liberian Capital," *Africa Report*, (November-December 1992), p. 5.
66. Cindy Shiner, "A Disarming Start," *Africa Report*, 39 (May/June 1994), pp. 62-64; "UN Adopts Resolution 813," *West Africa*, (12-18 April, 1993), p. 608. Also, following the UN imposition of the arms and military equipment embargo, the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali sent his representative, Gordon-Somers, to investigate the situation in Liberia.
67. "Waging War to Keep the Peace," *Human Rights Watch/Africa*, June 1993.
68. Ruiz, *Uprooted Liberians: Casualties of a Brutal War*, pp. 10-11.
69. Lois Whitman and Janet Fleischman, "The Child Soldiers," *Africa Report*, 39 (July/August 1994), pp. 65-66.
70. Ibid.
71. Ruiz, *Uprooted Liberians: Casualties of a Brutal War*, p. 14.
72. Lindsay Barret, "Dilemma of Neutrality," *West Africa*, (29 March-4 April 1993), p. 503.
73. "Liberia-Civil Strife," US Agency For International Development (USAID) Report No. 2, 18 May 1994, p. 3
74. *1994 World Refugee Survey*, pp. 59-60.
75. *Africa Report*, July/August 1994, p. 67.
76. Ben Asante, "The Road to Akosombo" *West Africa*, (21-27 November 1994), p. 1999.
77. Ben Asante interviewed Dr. Mohammed Chambas, Ghanaian Foreign Minister. See "We are making headway," *West Africa*, (12-18 December 1994), pp. 2115-17; also, Cindy Shiner, "The Authority Vacuum," *Africa Report*, (November-December 1994), pp. 22-25.
78. *1995 World Refugee Survey*, pp. 48-66.
79. *1996 World Refugee Survey* (Washington DC: USCR, 1996), pp. 45-46.
80. Ibid., pp. 45-65



81. Members of the new ruling council are: Charles Taylor (NPFL), Alhaji Kromah (ULIMO-K faction), George Boley (LPC), Oscar Quiah of the Liberian National Conference, traditional Chief Tamba Tailor, and Professor Wilton Sinkhole, chairman of the ruling council. The council will rule for a year to implement disarmament, repatriation and resettlement of refugees and organize elections.

82. Abdullah Dukuly, "Nigeria Leads Disarmament of Rebels," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 27 November 1966, p. 6.

83. See "Charles Taylor," 1992 *Current Biography Yearbook* (New York: H.W. Wilson, 1993), pp. 565-66.

84. Syrulwa L. Somah, *Historical Settlement of Liberia and Its Environmental Impact* (New York: University Press of America, 1995), p. 19.

85. Miller, "Homeless of Africa," p. 23.

86. See the report on "The Ongoing Civil War and Crisis in Liberia," House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Washington DC, 1992.

87. Lafayette Diggs, "The Praise of Mediocrity," p.13.