

STATEMENT
THE DECLARATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY
BY PRESIDENT ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF, R.L. -AUGUST 6, 2014

My fellow Liberians, our nation is currently affected by the deadly Ebola Virus and the disease has now spread to eight counties. Liberia is among three countries experiencing an unprecedented outbreak of the virus, the largest ever since this virus was first discovered. It now poses serious risks to the health, safety, security and welfare of our nation. And beyond the public health risk, the disease is now undermining the economic stability of our country to the tune of millions of dollars in lost revenue, productivity and economic activity. The health care system in the country is now under immense strain and the Ebola epidemic is having a chilling effect on the overall health care delivery. Out of fear of being infected with the disease, health care practitioners are afraid to accept new patients, especially in community clinics all across the country.

Consequently, many common diseases which are especially prevalent during the rainy season, such as malaria, typhoid and common cold, are going untreated and may lead to unnecessary and preventable deaths.

The virus currently has no cure and has a fatality rate of up to 90 percent. The aggregate number of cases; confirmed, probable and suspected in Liberia has now exceeded 500 with about 271 cumulative deaths, with 32 deaths among health care workers. The death rate among citizens, especially among health workers is alarming.

Two weeks ago, I established a National Task Force, which I chair myself, to respond to this crisis. I instructed all non-essential government staff to stay home for 30 days, ordered the closure of schools, and authorized the fumigation of all public buildings. We have shut down markets in affected areas and have restricted movement in others. We have improved our response time and contact tracking and have begun coordinating with regional and international partners.

Despite these and other continuing efforts, the threat continues to grow. Ignorance, poverty, as well as entrenched religious and cultural practices continue to exacerbate the spread of the disease especially in the counties. The actions allowed by statutes under the public health law are no longer adequate to deal with the Ebola epidemic in as comprehensive and holistic manner as the outbreak requires.

The scope and scale of the epidemic, the virulence and deadliness of the virus now exceed the capacity and statutory responsibility of any one government agency or ministry. The Ebola virus disease, the ramifications and consequences thereof, now constitute an unrest affecting the existence, security, and well-being of the Republic amounting to a clear and present danger.

The Government and people of Liberia require extraordinary measures for the very survival of our state and for the protection of the lives of our people.

Therefore, and by the virtue of the powers vested in me as President of the Republic of Liberia, I, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, and in keeping with Article 86(a) (b) of the Constitution of the Republic of Liberia, hereby declare a State of Emergency throughout the Republic of Liberia effective as of August 6, 2014 for a period of 90 days.

Under this State of Emergency, the Government will institute extraordinary measures, including, if need be, the suspensions of certain rights and privileges. As mandated by the Constitution, I will immediately forward this Declaration of the State of Emergency to the National Legislature, accompanied by an explanation of the facts and circumstances leading to the Declaration.

May God bless us all and preserve our great nation!