

**Statement by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
to the Nation on “Curbing Indiscipline”
Friday, May 10, 2013**

My Fellow Citizens:

I am concerned about an evolving trend in our society. Especially among young people, we are witnessing a creeping wave of intolerance, indiscipline and repeated threats of violence to express disagreements.

Some common features used to express disagreements include the setting up of roadblocks, assaults on other citizens, damaging private and public properties, locking up of instructors, hurling rocks at police, and even preventing fellow students from attending classes.

These actions cause us to stray from deepening the freedom and democracy we so cherish. Importantly, it walks us backward into lawlessness. As our history has shown, when a society slips into lawlessness, it does not only lose its quest for freedom and democracy, it also loses its potential for personal and collective improvement.

Surely, we can conduct our national conversations, air our grievances, and consult upon our common interests without violating the rights of others. In the New Liberia we are striving to build, there is no place for usurping the rights of others as a means to exercise your rights. Each citizen deserves to have his or her rights protected and preserved.

We could not be clearer: The right to protest, which our administration upholds, is not an excuse to be lawless. Protest is an extension of free speech, which is intended to support the vibrancy of democracies. In democratic orders, protests are carried out with respect for the rights of holders of varying views with which one disagrees. Here in Liberia, even during protests, we are constitutionally required to be peaceful, orderly and law abiding.

As Liberians, we may seem different because of our age, gender, religion, tribe or association. However, all of us want the same things for ourselves and for our children. We want to live in an environment of peace; we want the chance to succeed, to care for our children, and to be respected. Importantly, also, we want the law to always keep us equal by ensuring that the guilty is punished and the innocent is freed.

All of these are only possible in free and democratic societies – the kind of society we are endeavoring to build for ourselves and for our children. Therefore, from parents to educators, and from political to moral leaders, it is time we make conscious efforts and strengthen our resolve to stop this creeping advance of indiscipline and lawlessness. It is time to speak out against this violence creep!

In the same way that our administration challenged the courts recently, it is also time to show added courage over leniency in the enforcement of the law. We pledge, as always, to do so without fear and without favor. Let it therefore be known that we will continue to listen to disagreements, and will continue to expand the space for the airing of such disagreements, as we should.

However, using the legal agencies of enforcement at our disposal, we will insist on respect for the law and for the rights of others.

May God richly bless our Republic and strengthen our democracy.