

Eid ul-Fitr Dinner Remarks by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

October 26, 2006

Good evening and welcome. I'm so honored to welcome such distinguished guests to celebrate the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

Liberia is a better country because of our diversity. So it is fitting for us to honor the traditions of the Islamic faith by hosting this Eid ul-Fitr.

Ramadan is a time of fasting and prayer for the Muslim faithful. So tonight we are reminded of God's greatness and His commandments to live in peace and to help neighbors in need. According to Muslim teachings, God first revealed His word in the holy Qur'an to the prophet, Muhammad, during the month of Ramadan. That word has guided billions of believers across the centuries, and those believers built a culture of learning and literature and science.

The entire world continues to benefit from this faith and its achievements. Ramadan, like any other religious holiday, is a good time for people of different faiths to learn more about each other. And the more we learn, the more we find that many commitments are broadly shared. We share a commitment to family, to protect and love our children. We share a belief in God's justice, and man's moral responsibility. And we share the same hope for a future of peace in Liberia. We have much in common and much to learn from one another.

This evening, we gather in a spirit of peace and reconciliation. I appreciate your support of our development agenda in our campaign for national renewal. Tonight that partnership continues in this room, so that our country will soon know peace and reconciliation. Those who thrive on division have no home in any faith. Evil has no holy days. This evening we gather in the spirit of unity.

If we all wish to be a force for peace and reconciliation across religious and ethnic divides in Liberia -- if that is what we wish -- if we wish to do well in our fledging democracy, we must first be good to our families, our neighbors, our friends, our communities, and our nation.

I encourage all of you to help spread that message, to share the wellsprings of Islam with those who are different, to help people understand the values and the humanity that we share in common, and the texture and fabric and fiber and core of the beliefs and practices of Islam.

Children do not come into the world hating people of different tribes and faiths. That is something they learn to do. They either are explicitly taught to do it, or they learn to do it by following the example of others, or they learn to do it in reaction to oppression that they, themselves, experience. And those of us who are adults have a responsibility to change those childhoods, to give this generation of Liberian children a different future.

With God's help and with determination, courage and hope, I believe we will build a better future together for ourselves and our children.

Allah bless us all.