

**STATEMENT BY HER EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF
ON THE ARCELOR MITTAL NIMBA COUNTY OPERATIONS
JULY 10, 2014**

Fellow Liberians,

A few days ago, the safety and security of the main mining facility of Arcelor Mittal, located in Tokadi, Nimba County was attacked and violated. Staff, contractors and employees of the company were held hostage for hours without food or water. Offices were vandalized and mining equipment, vehicles, construction materials, office supplies and buildings were destroyed or looted. Law enforcement officers who were attempting to restore calm to the mining area and surrounding communities were shot at and injured. Attempts were made by the attackers to burn an important access bridge and damage the road leading to the mining facility.

On behalf of the Government and people of Liberia, we extend profound regrets to the Arcelor Mittal family and all those who were made to endure this dangerous breach to Liberia's cherished peace and security – the hard-earned environment which continues to make our collective development possible.

Although the full extent of the direct and associated damage is still being evaluated, for the Government of Liberia, these were more than attacks on a private company. They are attacks on the economy and on the future of the country. Our collective response must be decisive, immediate and forceful.

Accordingly, all accused of participating in these destructions will have their full day in court as quickly as possible. All those found to be guilty will face the fullest penalties imposed by the law. That process is underway and advancing. I will appoint a prominent counselor to chair a Board of Inquiry to which will be added eminent lawyers and citizens to undertake a detailed investigation of the root and other causes associated, as well as recommend further actions to ensure that such attacks are never repeated anywhere in Liberia.

As is to be expected, the Government of Liberia will dutifully undertake a repair to the damaged roads and bridges but the costs will be sourced from funds directly allocated for the development of Nimba County. The costs to repair the

damage and replace the properties destroyed, when determined, will be a subject of discussion between the Government and Arcelor Mittal.

With immediate effect, I have directed that a moratorium be placed on the issuance and use of alluvial mining licenses and permits in Nimba County until the full effects and associated costs on ArcelorMittal's operations are finally determined and known.

Fellow Citizens:

The attacks at Tokadi, in Nimba County are harsh reminders of the consequences of the abuse of freedoms. Over time, individuals were said to have engaged in the unlawful incitement of others to such violent behavior through the misuse of the media. As we have seen in Tokadi, and as it appears to be springing up elsewhere in the country including concession areas, the exercise of freedom without the associated responsibility leads to anarchy. Anarchy anywhere in our country undermines our collective progress. We cannot permit this to happen.

The Liberian Government is absolutely resolved that wherever and by whomever, the unlawful incitement of the public to violence will be dutifully punished according to law.

Finally, we thank Arcelor Mittal for resuming mining production. We congratulate the Liberia National Police for the swift and professional manner in which security and calmness was restored. We commend the local chiefs and community leaders, including the Nimba Legislative Caucus, for cooperating with the police in encouraging those who fled into the bushes to return home; those who perpetrated these attacks to turn themselves in and surrender to the police; and assisting in the retrieval of looted items.

May God bless Liberia and save the State.