

Guest Commentary

In Defense of The President's Executive Order No. 65

By: The Department of Public Affairs – Executive Mansion

The Beauty of our democratic system enables the free, fair, open and frank exchange of ideas that either favor or go against the government of the day. Lest we forget that the government duly elected by the people through a democratic process owes it to all and sundry in order to safeguard the public trust, we are doomed. As a people we cannot think of surviving the doomsday prophesy because it is not a recipe of national unity and renewal.

Evidently, many of the critics have begun to misread the intent and purposes of Executive Order No 65 without looking at the bigger picture. The bigger picture; we must all understand engrosses our totality as one people and one nation indivisible with liberty and justice for all.

We all certainly do agree that a special senatorial election was scheduled for October this year, but was unexpectedly truncated as a result of the intervening EBOLA nightmare that has since June plagued our country and neighboring Guinea and Sierra Leone.

Imperatively, a three month State of Emergency was sanctioned based on the powers invested in the President and concurrently endorsed by the Legislature. As the trauma and fear gripped Liberians – the government acted in the best interest of its people to minimize the increasing dearth tolls by instituting tougher measures consistent with local and international best practices.

While critics might believe otherwise, the government is accountable to its people and has a right to act in their supreme interest. Few weeks ago while the State of Emergency was in force – public gatherings and huge concentration of people were disallowed for the safety of the people. That was about the bigger picture.

The government agrees that the Special senatorial election will take place in the 15 political sub-divisions of the country but realizing that Monrovia remains a politically populous melting pot and a cantankerous environment amid election in light of the history of our capital city, extra-stringent measures must be put into place to ensure the security and safety of all Liberians.

Certainly, the lawyers will have a fair hearing in any court of law whatsoever but in the wake of acrimonious and frosty debates and arguments across the political divide; it is only prudent that appropriate measures are in place to preserve the sanity and security of the capital. Let us remind ourselves that after elections – we will still need a place to call our capital city.

Rather than reading political meaning in the issuance of Executive Order No. 65, which in the view of the Government is intended to strengthen its efforts to contain the spread of Ebola, protect the security of the State, maintain law and order, and promote peace and stability in the country; we encourage all well-meaning Liberians to desist from unnecessary bickering and put the interest of the country before all other consideration.

The Executive Order No. 65 is indicative of a restraining instrument because we are not in normal times. Notwithstanding, if anyone or party feels aggrieved – the

most favorable option is to resort to the legal process and not to engage in acts outside generally accepted civilized norms.

It is no doubt that any group of citizens have a right to assemble or hold peaceful gatherings but when the government decides to look at the bigger picture – we as law-abiding citizens must conform decorously.

It is high time Liberians come to the realization that the events of the last couple of weeks after the National Elections (NEC) announced the start of campaign, the capital city has been marred by increasing number of incidents of concerted mass movements of people on the streets of Monrovia and its environs, particularly rallies, demonstrations, and parades, which have led to persistent and frequent violations of the Vehicle and Traffic Laws of Liberia.

We saw deliberate obstruction to the free flow of traffic and the movement of peaceful citizens, the disruption of economic activities, and concomitant panic in the City with total disregard of the consequences thereof. The government therefore has a duty to ensure that where the rights of one group of citizens end – is precisely where those of rest of the population begin.

In conclusion, if we as a people and nation must fight and expel EBOLA out of Liberia - Executive Order No. 65 reckons that to allow the conduct of such process to continue with impunity and without control, will reasonably frustrate efforts to contain the Ebola virus disease in Liberia, undermine the security of the State and the maintenance of law and order, and negatively impact the economy. This all the reason why we must objectively join the aggressive combat against EBOLA campaign and in effect respect the letter and spirit of Executive Order No. 65.