

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Liberia

CAPITAL: Monrovia

SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Republic with Transitional Government

AREA: 111,370 Sq Km (43,000 Sq Mi)

ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION: 3,432,500



LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: Liberia is located on the southwestern coast of Africa. It is bound by Sierra Leone to the northwest, Guinea to the north, Ivory Coast to the east and northeast and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. The country can be divided into three topographical regions. (1.) The coastal belt of undulating plains characterized by tidal creeks, shallow lagoons and swamps. (2.) The plateau which rises slowly from the plain between 200 metres (656 feet) and 750 metres (2,461 feet) and is covered in forests as well as grasslands. (3.) A mountainous area that is densely forested and reaches Mt. Nimba, the country's highest point. Other mountain groups include the Wologisi Range, Bomi Hills and the Niete Mountains. The country has seven major rivers, the Mano, Loffa, St. Paul, Farmington, St. John, Cess and Cavalla which all flow towards the coast. Major Cities (pop. est.); Monrovia 400,000, Harbel 60,000, Gbarnga 30,000, Buchanan 25,000, Yekepa 16,000 (1985). Land Use; forested 18%, pastures 59%, agricultural-cultivated 4%, other 19% (1993).

CLIMATE: Liberia has a tropical climate with two wet seasons in the southeast and one wet season from May to October for the rest of the country. The climate is characterized by constant high temperatures and abundant rainfall. High humidity is common during the wet season and the prevailing winds are the NE and SW Monsoons as well as the Harmattan which is a dust laden wind from the Sahara Desert. Tornadoes are also common during the wet season. Average annual precipitation in Monrovia is 4,150 mm (163 inches) and average temperature ranges are from 22 degrees Celsius (72 degrees Fahrenheit) to 27 degrees Celsius (81 degrees Fahrenheit) all year.

PEOPLE: The population of Liberia consists of sixteen distinct tribes, with 95% of the population of indigenous origins, which include the Kpelle, Bassa, Gio, Kru, Grebo, Mano, Krahn, Gola, Gbandi, Loma, Kiffi, Vai, Di, Belle, Mandingo and Mende. The remaining 5% are repatriated slaves known as Americo-Liberians.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 27 persons per sq km (71 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 45.9% urban, 54.1% rural (1990). Sex Distribution; 50.6% male, 49.4% female (1990). Life Expectancy at Birth; 53.0 years male, 56.0 years female (1990). Age Breakdown; 43% under 15, 28% 15 to 29, 15% 30 to 44, 8% 45 to 59, 4% 60 to 74, 2% 75 and over (1984). Birth Rate; 47.3 per 1,000 (1990). Death Rate; 15.8 per 1,000 (1990). Increase Rate; 31.5 per 1,000 (1990). Infant Mortality Rate; 87.0 per 1,000 live births (1990).

RELIGIONS: Mostly Christians which account for 68% of the population. Over 18% of the population follow local native tribal beliefs and 14% are Muslims.

LANGUAGES: The official language is English, although only 30% of the population can speak it. Most of the population speak native languages, of which the dialects total over 20.

EDUCATION: Aged 25 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 87.1%, incomplete primary 4.8%, primary 1.5%, incomplete secondary 5.1%, higher 1.5% (1974). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 547,800 or 39.5% (1990).

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993: Pres. William Tubman served as President from 1944 until his death in 1971. He encouraged social and economic reforms known as his "Open Door" policies and worked to end discrimination by Americo-Liberians against the country's ethnic groups. William R. Tolbert succeeded Tubman and continued his policies. In Apr. 1979 demonstrations held by students and the newly formed opposition parties, called for general strikes which resulted in riots that were bloodily suppressed. In Apr. 1980 a small group of military officers led by Master Sgt. Sammuell K. Doe, who were descendants of Liberia's original ethnic groups, staged a revolt. They assassinated Tolbert, overthrew his government and established a military government with Doe as head of state. The Doe regime significantly increased the level of army pay and publicly executed 13 leading officials. In July 1984 a referendum approved a new constitution and in Oct. 1985 Doe was elected President. In Oct. 1988 William Kpolleh, leader of the opposition Liberian Action Party, and nine others were imprisoned for 10 years for plotting to overthrow the government. In Dec. 1989 Charles Taylor, leader of the National Patriotic Liberation Front (NPLF), launched an offensive to oust Doe. The majority of the initial fighting took place in the northeast as the rebel groups captured town after town. In Feb. 1990 the NPLF split into two rival factions with the other, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia, led by Prince Yormie Johnson and by July the rebels had reached the capital. In July 1990 Doe's troops massacred 600 refugees held up in St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Monrovia. On Sept. 10, 1990 Johnson had captured, tortured and killed Doe. Following which both Johnson and Taylor proclaimed themselves President. Fighting continued until Nov. 1990 when a cease-fire was accepted and an interim government was appointed, headed by Amos Sawyer as President. In Feb. 1991 the three rival factions, including the Armed Forces of Liberia, met to extend the cease-fire and agreed to national conference in March 1991 to establish a new interim government that resulted in Sawyer being reelected as President. In April 1991 border clashes broke out between the NPLF and Sierra Leone Government Forces. On June 11, 1991 Pres. Sawyer proposed a peace settlement, to be overseen by a peacekeeping force (ECOMOG) from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in which all Liberians would be treated equally. On Oct. 31, 1991 during a summit of West African leaders an agreement was

reached for elections to be held 6 months after the NPLF surrendered its territory, although on Jan. 15, 1992 the deadline for the NPLF to surrender its arms and territory passed without compliance. In April 1992 a Committee of Five from ECOWAS met with both Pres. Sawyer and Taylor, to reaffirm the 1991 peace accord. On April 29, 1992 Taylor announced he would dissolve his government and withdraw his troops from a 3km (1.8mi) exclusion zone along the Sierra Leone border. In June 1992 six Senegalese peacekeeping troops were killed within NPLF territory and in Aug. 1992 fighting erupted between the NPLF and rebel troops loyal to former Pres. Doe based in Sierra Leone. Throughout Oct. and Nov. 1992 fighting escalated between the NPLF and the ECOMOG and Armed Forces of Liberia alliance. Five nuns were also killed during the fighting, presumably by the NPLF. On Nov. 19, 1992 the UN Security Council called for a "complete" arms embargo of the country. In 1993 the leaders of seven ECOWAS countries gave the ECOMOG the power to impose the peace accords of 1991 by force and in Jan. 1993 the newly reinforced ECOMOG launched successful offensives capturing vital NPLF territory. In Feb. 1993 another 5,000 ECOMOG troops arrived and on June 6, 1993 a massacre of refugees at Carter Camp, Harbel by the Armed Forces of Liberia, resulted in some 600 being mutilated and killed. In July 1993 Pres. Sawyer's interim government, the NPLF and the supporters of former Pres. Doe, the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), met in Benin and agreed to a cease-fire from Aug. 1, 1993 as well as the establishment of a transitional government, the Council of State, that included five representatives of the factions. In Nov. 1993 the agreement broke down following Sawyer and Taylor's provocative replacement of their representatives.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the Dollar (LD) divided into 100 Cents.

ECONOMY: Gross National Product; USD \$1,178,000,000 (1990). Public Debt; USD \$1,070,000,000 (1993). Imports; LD \$4,081,200,000 (1991). Exports; LD \$556,500,000 (1991). Tourism Receipts; USD \$6,000,000 (1986). Balance of Trade; LD \$160,600,000 (1988). Economically Active Population; 704,321 or 33.5% of total population (1984). Unemployed; 12.5% (1984).

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are Germany, the USA, Italy, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the UK, Japan and Spain.

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Bananas, Cassava, Cocoa, Coffee, Diamonds, Gold, Iron Ore, Maize, Palm Kernels, Rice, Rubber, Timber.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, Food Processing, Forestry, Mining.

MAIN EXPORTS: Cocoa, Diamonds, Gold, Iron Ore, Rubber, Timber.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; route length 490 km (304 mi) (1990), passenger-km 0 (0 passenger-mi) (1988), cargo ton-km 1,746,000,000 (1,196,000,000 short ton-mi) (1988). Roads; length 8,064 km (5,011 mi) (1987). Vehicles; cars 7,148 (1987), trucks and buses 4,031 (1987). Merchant Marine; vessels 1,688 (1990), deadweight tonnage 99,225,770 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 17,000,000 (10,563,000 passenger-mi) (1980), cargo ton-km 100,000 (68,490 short ton-mi) (1980).

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 8 with a total circulation of 35,000 (1992). Radio; receivers 600,000 (1993). Television; receivers 45,000 (1993). Telephones; units 4,500 (1993).

MILITARY: 3,000 (1995) total active duty personnel while Military expenditure accounts for 3.8% (1988) of the Gross National Product (GNP).