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POLICE PRACTICES IN LIBERIA
A STUDY OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND PRACTICES OF FAIR TRIAL, CORRUPTION AND CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT

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POLICE PRACTICES IN LIBERIA

A STUDY OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND PRACTICES OF FAIR TRIAL, CORRUPTION AND CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT

A praxis paper on urban violence prepared in collaboration between LAPS - Liberia Association for Psychosocial Services and DIGNITY- Danish Institute Against Torture for the Global Alliance.

Kari Øygard Larsen, Jo-Anne Prud'Homme, Steffen Jensen, Seidu Swaray and N. Russell Allen

Contents

Foreword

If we want to prevent torture and ill-treatment it is imperative to focus on the police and policing practices. Police are without any doubt responsible for the bulk of torture and ill-treatment across the world. Human rights organizations know this and have addressed it since at least the end of the Second World War. For very good reasons, the focus has been on places of detention – holding cells, jails and prisons. This focus is clear in for instance the Optional Protocol of the Convention Against Torture, which sets up monitoring systems for detention around the world. But while the focus on detention makes sense, both academic research and NGO work in urban centers suggest that it is necessary to complement this advocacy with a focus on extra-custodial police violence. Increasingly, as the report by the Special UN Rapporteur for Torture and Forced Disappearances illustrates, there is a growing awareness of the importance of focusing on torture and ill-treatment outside of detention centers.[1] This praxis paper on policing practices in Liberia is part of our contribution to the work around extra-custodial police violence. The other reports with this focus comprise a synthesis report on extra-custodial policing in Liberia, South Africa and the Philippines comparing international standards, national frameworks and policing practices, and a research-based position paper on the 'war on drugs' in the Philippines, asking and answering seven essential questions about the drug war.

The paper is the product of the collaboration between four like-minded organizations: BALAY Rehabilitation Centre in the Philippines, The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in South Africa (CSVR), The Liberia Association of Psycho-social Services (LAPS) in Liberia and DIGNITY-Danish Institute Against Torture in Denmark. The collaboration has been formalized under the heading 'The Global Alliance Against Authority-Based Violence', established in 2014. The basic premise of the alliance is that around the world and across different contexts, groups of people are deemed 'victimizable' by the powers that be – either state or non-state – and hence made legitimate targets of order-maintaining – or authority-based – violence. The risk groups might include young, indigent and criminalized men in slum areas, suspects of terrorism and gangsterism, migrants and refugees, sexual minorities or alleged carriers of disease like ebola. Their alleged transgressions might be based in a legal framework (like drug peddling) or in moral norms (like sexuality). However, all are likely victims of state or non-state violence. At the time of writing, the Philippine 'war on drugs' provides a chilling example of the legitimacy of violence against such groups.

As a central element in the collaboration, we produce cross-cutting analyses about different issues relevant to the practice of the partners of the Global Alliance while employing different methodologies. All topics emerge from our common discussions on our different contexts, and include linking human rights, development and violence in the city; legal frameworks for policing poor urban neighborhoods (like this one); social work models; community organizing strategies and partnership models.

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1   General Assembly (2017). Extra-custodial use of force and the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, http://undocs.org/A/72/178.

Executive summary and recommendations

In this paper, we explore the discrepancies between normative frameworks and policing practices in relation to policing in Liberia. Focusing on fair trial, corruption and civilian oversight, the paper illustrates that while progress has been made, there is still a long way to go before the practices live up to the normative legal frameworks. While this is hardly a surprising conclusion, by comparing legal frameworks from both human rights and domestic law with the practices, we can get a detailed account of the challenges as well as the opportunities for further action.

Methodologically, the report is based on an interdisciplinary approach that combines ethnography with legal analysis: we incorporate analysis of legal texts with participant observation among – and interviews with – residents, police officers, NGO workers, representatives of the international organizations and the government.

While there are serious challenges, the paper and the research have also shown there is cause for optimism as there is political will in Liberia to address these discrepancies. The main problem remains one of resources and capacity. Hence, there are important roles for both civil society and for the international community.

Recommendations to civil society:

1. Advocate for closing the gaps between domestic and international legal and policy frameworks relating to fair trial standards.

2. Advocate for the implementation of international human rights standards through domestic legal and policy frameworks beyond custodial settings.

3. Engage with the Liberian National Police (LNP) to carry out trainings and workshops focused on steps that should be taken to contribute to the building of public trust and confidence in the police.

Recommendations to the international community present in Liberia:

1. Continue to work comprehensively and concretely on efforts to combat corruption.

2. Prioritize funding and support for the Civilian Complaints Review Board.

3. Advocate for closing the gaps between domestic and international legal and policy frameworks relating to fair trial standards.

1. Introduction

This praxis paper is a case-based extension of a DIGNITY legal study investigating the legal framework of police work in relation to international human rights standards[2]. While the legal study is a comprehensive analysis of the entire legal system surrounding policing in the Philippines, South Africa and Liberia, this praxis paper focuses on three human rights standards in Liberia, so as to provide insights into how policing is carried out on the ground. The three areas comprise corruption, fair trial and civilian oversight. These three areas were the ones that emerged most powerfully in our data collection and in the work of LAPS, the Liberia Association for Psychosocial Services. As such, the paper provides practice-based analyses of the everyday policing of urban Liberia after the implementation of the post-war security sector reform. The study highlights some of the gaps and issues in the current everyday urban policing of Monrovia, manifesting the discrepancies between ideal and reality; between normative legal frameworks and policing practices.

The main body of the report contains analyses of the three themes. To introduce these analyses, we begin by outlining the relationship between urban violence and policing and sketching an overview of the Liberian context. Each of the three analytical sections contains a description of international and domestic legal frameworks around corruption, fair trial and oversight. This is followed by an exploration of policing practices highlighting the discrepancies between framework and practice. The aims of exploring the discrepancies in policing are threefold: 1) to inform our own practices when working with the police in tackling urban, authority-based violence; 2) to lay a foundation for dialogue with the Liberian National Police (LNP) and 3) to create the basis for advocacy with politicians and legal institutions in Liberia around policing urban areas.

The ethnographic data for this report was gathered by the first author, a research assistant with DIGNITY, who worked in collaboration with LAPS staff. In April 2016, with the help of a research assistant and community development facilitators from Liberia Association of Psychosocial Services, LAPS, she recorded case studies and conducted semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with police officers, UN staff, representatives from local CSOs and NGOs, lawyers and victims of police violence. Between August and November, she did ethnographic fieldwork in the law faculty in the University of Liberia and among a group of motorcyclists (often suspected of violent behavior as ex-combatants) in a slum community on the outskirts of Monrovia. All names of interviewees have been changed.

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2   Jo-Anne Prud'Homme du Hancourt et al., Legal Study on Policing and Human Rights Standards; Internationally and in Three Countries of the Global South (South Africa, Philippines and Liberia) (DIGNITY) (forthcoming)

2. Policing and urban violence

The role of the police in modern democracies is to provide safety and security for all members of society. The police have been empowered by the state to enforce the rule of law and prevent and detect crimes. To fulfill their commitment to serve the general public, police officers may be subjected to dangerous situations in which their own safety is at risk.[3] Therefore, police are afforded specific powers to enable them to carry out this role: they have a monopoly on violence, which includes the power to use force and firearms, to arrest and detain, and to carry out search and seizure operations. However, these powers and the way they are exercised must conform to the principle of proportionality, and may not infringe on the human rights of those impacted by the law enforcement work.[4]

Human rights which can be impacted by police actions include:

1. Right to human dignity (and integrity)

2. Right to life

3. Right to security and liberty, and freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention

4. Freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

5. Right to fair trial

6. Right to privacy

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3   Prud'Homme du Hancourt et al.
4   Prud'Homme du Hancourt et al.

To take the measure of current everyday policing in Monrovia and identify the key problems, this paper takes its point of departure in corruption, the right to a fair trial and oversight of police. Although these three themes refer to separate laws and standards, they are interconnected and feed into each other in dynamic ways, as will be demonstrated in the paper. The problems that arise in relation to the three issues all relate to the public's perception of the police, and furthermore all three issues impact on the extent to which the LNP's practices are carried out with respect for and protection of international human rights standards. Democratic policing depends on cooperation between the public and the police. To establish and maintain this cooperation, it is crucial that the public trusts the police. Because extra power is vested in the police, it is important that they demonstrate their ability to manage this power rightfully; this is how the public comes to recognize the police as a legitimate authority and trusts that they will work for the general public good. To contextualize and understand police practices in relation to corruption, the right to a fair trial and oversight, we investigate the public's perception of the LNP before venturing into the three issues. However, in order to make sense of LNP practices and public perceptions of them, it is important to situate this paper against the background of Liberia's recent political history.

3. The Liberian Context

Liberia has a turbulent past which includes civil wars and several coup d'états within the past 35 years. From 1989 until 2003 the country was plagued by two devastating civil wars, which left at least 150,000 people dead and sent another 850,000 fleeing to neighboring countries like Sierra Leone and Guinea[5]. During the wars, the already fragile infrastructure was destroyed, and the societal fabric deeply damaged. In 2005 Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected president of Liberia in a relatively peaceful democratic election. As the first democratically elected female president in the continent, Sirleaf promised to keep Liberia at peace and to fight corruption at every level.

She was not left alone to keep these promises. In 2003, following the resignation of President Charles Taylor and the conclusion of the Second Liberian Civil War, one of the biggest United Nations peacekeeping missions (United Nations Mission in Liberia, UNMIL) had arrived in the war-torn country. They operated under UN resolution 1509, which recommended sending in 15,000 UN employees to secure peace and stability in the war-torn country[6]. Although the mandate was initially designated to last in the immediate post-war period of twelve months, the UNMIL is still present in Liberia at the time of writing, late 2017. The extensions of the mandate have been many as it has been argued that especially Liberia's security sector has been too fragile and fragmented to take over the responsibility of keeping Liberia safe.

Policing Post-War Liberia

After the civil war ended, the entire Liberian security sector embarked on a long reform process that is still ongoing. The Liberian National Police, LNP, and the Armed Forces of Liberia, AFL, were completely reformed in terms of both structure and personnel with the help of the United Nations and the United States of America. While the UNMIL oversaw the reform of the LNP, the AFL was reformed by the USA. In the UNMIL reform of the LNP, more than 40 UN member countries took part in the process of developing the police force, drafting new police legislation and educating the new officers.[7] At the onset of the reform process, all existing police officers were given the option to either stop working in the police and get a small pension or to reenroll and go through a new police training program at the Police Training Academy, PTA. Due to the LNP's involvement in the civil wars all officers who reenrolled had to go through a vetting process in their local communities. The aim of the vetting process was to weed out all officers who had played an active part in the civil wars to make sure the new police force could be trusted by the public. However, the vetting process was criticized by many observers for not being thorough enough, and for leaving powerful police officers who had participated in the war with the opportunity to intimidate community members and prevent them from advising the vetting team to exclude them.[8]

The PTA program was designed by UNMIL and executed by United Nations Police, UNPOL, comprising police officers from a number of different UN member states. In a conversation with DIGNITY researchers, a junior deputy at the PTA pointed out that there were 'too many countries to remember' involved in the educating and training of new officers. According to sources in the PTA and representatives from Civil Society Organizations, CSOs, this has also led

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5   UNMIL Background - United Nations Mission in Liberia, http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmil/background.shtml (last visited Apr 18, 2017)

6   United Nations, Resolution 1509 (2003), http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1509(2003)

7   UN Police UNMIL, https://unmil.unmissions.org/un-police (last visited Apr 5, 2017)

8   Interview with the Governance Commission April 11th, 2016.

to confusion about what was considered the most fruitful ways of teaching and interpreting human rights. These sources claim that officers from different countries had not only diverse methods for teaching, but also different views on police work and human rights. This, however, was contested by the UNPOL commissioner, who asserted that the UN member states worked in a similar manner because they worked through a UN mandate.

Robbing for the police

One of LAPS' community development counselors recorded the life story of their beneficiary Thomas in a slum area, the Doe community, on the edge of Monrovia. Thomas had been a child soldier during the war. After the war, he became involved in organized crime – an occupation that ended in him being captured and arrested by the police and sentenced to five years in prison. He claims that in prison, the police would beat him and at times give him a uniform and, along with other detainees, release them into small communities at night and demand that they commit robberies and hand over the goods to the police.

Stories similar to this circulate in Monrovia. Although this story has not been confirmed, rumors like this illustrate the distrust in the police and the uncertainty surrounding the security sector in Liberia.

Since the civil war and the arrival of UNMIL, the PTA has focused on human rights education as an integral part of the program for the recruits. At the PTA, all recruits must take a course in human rights, but many other courses have been developed to teach the officers how to behave in accordance with human rights standards, such as a course on how to employ force. If an officer is charged with misconduct the officer will have to do another human rights course to reenter the police (often in addition to other forms of disciplining, most often suspension from work for a limited time or a fine paid to the complainant[9]).

Over the past 12 years the UN mandate has changed and been renegotiated. On June 30th, 2016, the mandate changed from an operational mandate to an advisory mandate. This meant that the UNMIL underwent an immense drawdown (withdrawal of personnel from the mission). The drawdown was a topic widely discussed at all levels of Monrovian society during fieldwork for this study, and in the interviews conducted in April 2016 all interviewees mentioned its significance in relation to the security sector reform process. In general, CSO representatives, Monrovia residents, police, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) members and UN staff were all worried about the drawdown[10]. A comment from an officer in the Professional Standards Division was fairly representative: *"If things are this bad now, imagine how they'll be when UNMIL leaves"[11]*. Although people agree that the UNMIL will have to leave at some point, the general perception is that the Liberian security sector is not yet strong enough to maintain law and order and provide security for the Liberian people. When talking informally to Liberians in the street they would often express anxiety about not seeing the 'blue helmets' (the UN soldiers) around any longer, revealing a mistrust and fear that the Liberian security sector would not be able to protect its

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9   Interview PSD April 7th, 2016.
10   UNMIL Departure Worries ECOWAS, Daily Observer, Apr. 28, 2017, https://www.liberianobserver.com/news/unmil-departure-worries-ecowas/
11   Interview Monrovia April 7th, 2016

citizens. However, a year and a half after the drawdown, there have not been any violent outburst or security threats that the LNP or AFL have not been able to handle. Additionally, there has not been as much violence in relation to the recent national presidential election campaigns, which have in the past been violent. Opposition leader and national football hero George Weah easily defeated his rival, Sirleaf's vice-president Joseph Boakai, in a presidential run-off in late December 2017 after no clear presidential candidate emerged in a first round of voting in October.

Internally in the UN, opinions about the readiness of the LNP and AFL differ, but it is widely agreed that the Liberian state has become overly dependent on the UNMIL. This seems to be related especially to the public's lack of trust in the government. As a legal counselor put it, *"people want to see those blue caps around"*[12]. This epitomizes a generalized fear among Liberians that law and order will break down when UNMIL leaves for good.

Perceptions of the LNP

The general perception among the public in Liberia is that the police are not to be trusted. In interviews, people described the police institution as malfunctioning, highly politicized, and corrupt[13]. The lack of trust in police is especially evident in relation to the abovementioned UNMIL drawdown. According to a source in the UN people express an immense fear that violence will resurface and that the police will take advantage of their power once the UN monitoring stops[14]. Such fears intensified in April 2016 when three police officers were accused of aiding in armed robberies[15]. Several people referred to this incident when explaining why the police force cannot yet be trusted and why the country is not ready for a complete UNMIL withdrawal.

In addition to the distrust and fear, many citizens feel the police do not act as actual public servants, but rather that they only serve the rich, who can afford to pay them to investigate their cases. This problem was highlighted in the 2013 Human Rights Watch report *No Money No Justice: Police Corruption and Abuse in Liberia[16]*, which details how police officers charge money for transportation to crime scenes and investigation of criminal cases[17]. This means that the poor are denied justice. The expense and the view of the police as an inefficient institution often combine to discourage victims of crime from reporting the incident to the police[18]. Thus, when the crime rate in Monrovia is said to be lower than in some European cities[19], it should be taken into consideration that an unquantifiable number of crimes go unreported.

12   Interview Monrovia April 7th, 2016
13   Source in the Governance commission, e-mail correspondence, April 2016.
14   Interview 11.04.16, UNMIL, and see also Liberian National Police,Bureau of Immigration Acts Ratified - allAfrica.com allAfrica.com, http://allafrica.com/stories/201603180629.html (last visited Apr 5, 2017).
15   Armed robberies are known to happen in Monrovia, but they rarely reported because police is not trusted to handle that case and because they often demand money to investigate, see also Alvin Worzi, Liberia: "Police Armed Robbers" Turned Over to Justice Ministry - allAfrica.com, allAfrica.com, Feb. 3, 2016, http://allafrica.com/stories/201602031083.html (last visited Apr 5, 2017); Bettie K. J. Mbayo, Liberia: Three Liberian Police Officers Fired for Alleged Armed Robbery, Front Page Africa, Apr. 10, 2017, http://allafrica.com/stories/201704110678.html.
16   Valerie Brender & Human Rights Watch, "No money, no justice": police corruption and abuse in Liberia (2013), http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/liberia0813_forUpload_0.pdf (last visited Apr 5, 2017).
17   This claim was corroborated in the interviews with CSO representatives and police themselves.
18   Brender & Human Rights Watch.
19   Interview with UNPOL April 14th, 2016, who claimed that crime rates in Monrovia were lower than in Oslo, Norway.

These issues, in combination with a post-war uncertainty about the credibility of public institutions more generally, have led to a situation where the police have little legitimacy in the eyes of the public. This is reflected in the public's avoidance of and behavior towards the police, which we expand on later in the paper.

Despite these negative perceptions of the police force as an institution, CSO representatives, ordinary Liberians and UN personnel interviewed for this paper stated that they did not believe that individual police officers were 'bad guys'; in fact, many interviewees pointed out that most officers are 'good guys', but they work under very bad conditions. These include that the officers must pay for their own uniforms, which is the reason that many officers only have one. In general, the budget for the police is extremely low[20], meaning the police lack vehicles, means of communication, and other tools for investigation. This has a devastating effect on their capacity to solve crimes and consequently on the public's perception of their professionalism.

4. Anti-Corruption

Legal framework

Corruption does not in itself constitute a violation of human rights. However, there is often a correlation between corruption and a lack of respect for human rights standards. Therefore, prevention of corruption is central to any human rights-based policing system. This includes legislation prohibiting such acts as well as mechanisms for ensuring accountability for those guilty of corruption[21].

Human Rights Standards

According to the OHCHR code of conduct "Law enforcement [officers] shall not commit any act of corruption. They shall rigorously oppose and combat all such acts"[22] .

Domestic law

In Liberia, there are several pieces of legislation and policy documents addressing the issue of corruption amongst Liberian police officers, and public officials more generally. The Penal Code criminalizes bribery, unlawful rewarding of public servants, unlawful compensation for assistance in government matters, and trading in public office under section 12, making clear that corrupt practices are considered criminal acts which may be prosecuted as such[23]. Corruption by law enforcement officers is also prohibited under the Liberian Code of Conduct for public officials, which is legally binding, and which provides detailed requirements for ensuring bribery and corruption do not take place. The code prohibits the use of official positions to pursue private interests that may result in conflict of interest, as well as nepotism and preferential treatment in the performance of public duties. In addition, the LNP Duty Manual includes a chapter focused on regulations that prohibit corruption. Chapter 3.2. calls for accountability for "all officers, including commanders, managers, supervisors, whether employed or appointed, whose acts or omissions constitute corrupt practices, possible criminality or whose acts or omissions serves to undermine public trust in the LNP." The manual calls for investigations into all allegations of corrupt practices falling within Chapter 12 of the Penal Code of Liberia, which deals with Offences Against Government Integrity[24].

In a nutshell, a legal framework aimed at preventing and punishing corruption is in place. Despite this, corruption remains one of the most serious problems plaguing the LNP, as well as the Liberian governmental structure more broadly.

21   Prud'Homme du Hancourt et al.

22   United Nations, Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials (1979), http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/LawEnforcementOfficials.aspx

23   Liberian Penal Law (1976), http://www.icla.up.ac.za/images/un/use-of-force/africa/Liberia/Penal%20Code%20Liberia%201978.pdf

24   Prud'Homme du Hancourt et al.

Practice

Corruption, then, is a major problem in Liberia, and the LNP is no exception. While many of the problems in the police force have been ascribed to the entire police institution, accusations of corruption and abuse of power have repeatedly been directed at its highest ranks[25]. Neither past nor current police commissioners have overcome the problem. Besides, the commissioners were appointed by President Sirleaf, which has caused many accusations of nepotism[26]. Although President Sirleaf promised to fight corruption she herself and her administration have faced several allegations of corruption[27].

Police officer talking to a group of motorcycle taxi riders at GBK on the outskirts of Monrovia

25   Lennart Dodoo, Liberian Police Officers Complain of Lack of Food, Stipend Despite Working 24/7, Front Page Africa, Nov. 9, 2017, http://allafrica.com/stories/201711090137.html.

26   See also: http://allafrica.com/stories/201611071549.html)

27   See also Helene Cooper, Liberia's Ebola Crisis Puts President in Harsh Light, The New York Times, Oct. 30, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/31/world/africa/liberias-ebola-crisis-puts-president-in-harsh-light.html (last visited Nov 29, 2017); Simon Allison, Analysis: It's time to reassess Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Daily Maverick, Oct. 10, 2012, https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-10-10-analysis-its-time-to-reassess-ellen-johnson-sirleaf/#.Wh6mVY7yuUl; BBC News, Liberia laureate Gbowee chides Sirleaf on corruption, BBC News, Oct. 8, 2017, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-19876111.

According to a prominent Liberian counselor of law *"corruption is everywhere in Liberia"[28]* . This is despite the establishment of the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission, LACC, in 2008. Although the LACC has the power to investigate and prosecute corruption cases, it rarely does, and it is a weak institution due to lack of resources, among other issues. The lack of convictions of police officers on corruption charges contributes to a persistent culture of impunity. The 2013 Human Rights Watch report mentioned earlier, *No Money, No Justice,* is a damning report detailing the scale of corruption in the LNP. According to the report, "Police corruption [in Liberia] severely impedes proper administration of justice and denies Liberians their basic rights to personal security and redress." Corruption is seen in the form of extortion at all stages of investigation, regardless of the kind of crime. The rampant extortion promotes other abusive practices such as arbitrary arrest and detention[29].

German Payday

The blurring of lines between illegitimate and legitimate becomes visible in community members' stories about the 'German payday'.

Fred is a young man who lives in Doe Community on the outskirts of Monrovia, where LAPS' community development facilitators met him and recorded his story of police violence in the form of a 'German payday'. He came to Monrovia after the war and he has no relatives to support him in the city. To sustain himself he started selling biscuits as a 'yana boy' in the streets of Monrovia. A yana boy sells on the side of the road or in between the cars at traffic lights. One Saturday as he was selling his biscuits near the main market a group of police officers came riding by in a pick-up truck. They stopped the car and the officers jumped down and took his goods. The police officers started taking off again as he was begging them to tell him where he could pick up his belongings. He jumped on the car, expecting the police to take him to the station along with his goods, but instead the officers took him to an unfamiliar palace where they beat him up. He never saw his goods again. He and the LAPS staff explained that this is known as 'German payday'.

German payday is when officers, often on a Friday or Saturday, go to the market to raid the stalls where people trade and exchange. Police justify the raids with the excuse that the traders do not have permit, and hence their trading is illegal. However, the police officers do not issue fines to the traders. Rather, they take the traders' goods to the police station and demand bribes to give them back. A source in the Ministry of Justice explains that street vendors, de facto, do not have the same rights as other citizens (05.04.16). The police officers, in this way, pocket the bribes and buy nice things and food for their family for the weekend, hence 'German' payday. However, even while acknowledging that this practice is eroding their society, the victims of police violence and targets of the German payday still expressed understanding for the police officers who are active in these events, because they just want to do nice things for their families: "because on Sunday your family need to eat the best of all meals" (12.04.16)

However, the government and LACC have launched a corruption awareness campaign and Monrovia is now full of billboards with messages such as *"Undress corruption. Don't hide it. Report all cases of corruption"* or *"Shine your eye. Corruption. Da everybody business"* urging citizens not to pay bribes and to report incidents of corruption. However, little seems to be

28   Interview April 7th, 2016, Monrovia.
29   Prud'Homme du Hancourt et al.

working and the citizens still perceive the government as extremely corrupt, with the police ranked as the most corrupt institution in the country[30]. An article in The Economist states that two thirds of all people who encounter the police pay bribes or do favors for the officers[31]. For instance, on the streets of Liberia, the police usually solicit and/or accept bribes from drivers—which means official fines seldom reach the treasury of the government after violations of traffic rules or other offenses. Besides, with or without committing offenses, the police usually request or beg drivers for money.

In discussions with CSO and NGO representatives, lawyers and police officers about police practices, corruption was a recurring theme. Ranging from traffic corruption to rumors of embezzlement by the police commissioner, corruption was framed as one of the biggest challenges facing the LNP. This claim is corroborated in the previously mentioned Human Rights Watch report, which warns that the rampant police corruption threatens the human rights of the Liberian population[32]. However, again the police are not necessarily portrayed as 'bad guys' because of their corrupt practices. Rather, people seem to understand why the police are corrupt and often make excuses for them such as "their salary is too low", "they don't have transportation", "they have families to feed", and "there are many good guys in the police, but the institution is ruining them"[33]. This does not mean that they think corruption is okay, but it does point to the fact that corruption is not an isolated event – rather, it a highly context-based practice that is fostered by certain conditions, and has become an integral part of daily life for many Liberians. However, the police institution itself is not seen as entirely bad, as one interlocutor told me "the police is not a bad institution, but there are many bad officers"[34]. As such, neither the institution nor the officers is seen as entirely bad. Rather, corruption is seen as endemic to the Liberian society and thus a part of all institutions and everyday life. An employee in the Ministry of Justice said that corruption was partly the responsibility of citizens who, by committing offenses and violations, enable police officers to be corrupt. Take for instance traffic corruption: if somebody is stopped by the police and is offered the option of paying a bribe instead of a fine, they often choose the bribe, as it is usually less than the official fine. Thus, by both breaking the law and choosing not to pay the official fine, citizens enable police corruption. This points to a problem of legitimacy; in other words the lines between the legitimate and the illegitimate are so blurred that corruption in some cases is seen as understandable, and hence legitimate. However, the motorcyclists interviewed for this report stated that they felt targeted by the police even though they did not commit any crimes. They also said they would never dare to ask for a real fine in place of a bribe, as they feared the police would incarcerate them. This reveals a need to look more closely at the interlinkages between authority-based violence to better understand corrupt practices[35].

30   Brender & Human Rights Watch; Marie Chêne, Overview of corruption and anti-corruption in Liberia (Transparency International) (2012), https://www.transparency.org/files/content/corruptionqas/324_Overview_of_corruption_and_anti-corruption_in_Liberia.pdf.

31   Aid brought Liberia back from the Brink, The Economist, Jul. 29, 2017, https://www.economist.com/news/international/21724383-it-also-weakened-countrys-fledgling-government-aid-brought-liberia-back (last visited Nov 2, 2017).

32   Brender & Human Rights Watch.

33   Informal conversations with Liberians during field visit in April 2016

34   Interviews April 15th, 2016.

35   See Jensen, S; M. Andersen; K. Larsen and L. Hansen. 2017. Introduction: Towards Violent Exchange, in Corruption and Torture: Violent Exchange and the Policing of the Urban Poor 7–40, Aalborg University Press

The pervasive character of corruption in Liberia is especially interesting contrasted with the prominent focus on combatting corruption. In all interviews conducted, corruption was highlighted as one of the biggest challenges to the Liberian society, but at the same time people expressed understanding for corrupt police officers and other government officials. Billboards at the side of the road, and signs at the police station, saying "officers are not allowed to take money for filing a police report" seem to have little effect. A source in the PSD stated that for many officers "*corruption pays off*"[36], and went on to explain the different ways in which police officers could make money through corruption: for example, skipping work and going to regulate traffic unofficially, but in uniform, and resolving disputes in local communities through one's authority as an officer. It was pointed out several times that police officers often skip work to go to local communities, wearing their uniform, to settle local disputes and act as mediators or judges, thus denying the accused of the right to a trial. This shows that the police institution does carry a certain level of authority and officers are respected in local communities. At the same time, these stories shape the public image of the police as greedy and corrupt, and may thus serve to undermine their authority in the long run.

Sub-Conclusion

There is in Liberia an obvious gap between ideal and practice. Although the legal framework criminalizing corruption is in place, corruption is rife. As long as corruption continues to pay off and government officials themselves keep engaging in corrupt practices, there is little hope for change. Government officials, including police officers, as well as Liberian civilians – especially those who usually come into conflict with the law – legitimatize police corruption, both by accepting or paying bribes, and by making excuses for the practice. This implies that the Liberian society is more in favor of finding a "short cut" to solutions and bypassing the laws than upholding the law. This also points to the fact that the written laws of Liberia are not implemented to the fullest by the government—a systemic virus that keeps dragging the Liberian society in the direction of lawlessness and corruption. This goes hand in hand with a need for more accountability and oversight, which we will return to later.

The consequences of rampant corruption within the LNP are many: lack of trust in the police by the public, lack of redress for wronged citizens, and a culture of impunity that fosters the temptation for police to commit other offenses. The lack of access to justice causes other problems too, one of which we will turn our attention to next: people taking justice into own hands, thus neglecting the accused person's right to a fair trial.

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36   Interview PSD April 7th, 2016.

5. Fair Trial

Legal framework

The right to a fair, impartial trial is a central principle for any democracy and for the guarantee of a just society where human rights are upheld and respected. A fair trial is a crucial means for protecting citizens from the potential of violence carried out by police. The power to arrest citizens and deprive them of their freedoms must be based on the rule of law and hence be decided upon through a legal process that meets the clear-cut international human rights standards for a fair trial. These include: equality before the courts; a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law; the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to the law; the right to appeal a conviction to a higher court; the right to be tried without undue delay; the right to have adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense and communicate with counsel of his own choosing; the right to be tried without undue delay; and the right not to be compelled to testify against oneself.

Human Rights Standards

The right to a fair trial is enshrined in Article 7 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights as well as Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which are legally binding on Liberia. Further, Article 10 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads: "Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him."

Domestic law

The right to a fair trial is secured by the Liberian constitution. Article 20 a. reads: "No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, security of the person, property, privilege or any other right except as the outcome of a hearing judgment consistent with the provisions laid down in this Constitution and in accordance with due process of law. Justice shall be done without sale, denial or delay; and in all cases not arising in courts not of record, under courts-martial and upon impeachment, the parties shall have the right to trial by jury."[37]

Further, Article 21 e. states: "Nor shall any person be seized and kept among convicted prisoners or treated as a convict, unless such person first shall have been convicted of a crime in court of competent jurisdiction."[38]

These constitutional rights are underscored by the Liberian Criminal Procedure Law. Chapter 2, paragraph 2.1 reads that it is the right of the defendant in a criminal action to be presumed innocent until the contrary is proved; and in case of a reasonable doubt whether his guilt is satisfactorily shown, he is entitled to an acquittal. Further, chapter 20 paragraph 20.1 reads that the defendant is entitled to trial by jury in a criminal action in which he is charged with any crime other than petty larceny or a petty offense. In this way, the defendant has the right to a trial before receiving any punishment.[39]

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37   Constitution of Liberia (1986), http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/lbr129839.pdf
38   Constitution of Liberia
39   Liberia: Criminal Procedure Law (1969), http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b5410.html (last visited Dec 6, 2017)

Practice

The right to a fair trial, then, is guaranteed by the Liberian legal framework. However, in practice there are certain challenges to this in relation to the work of the LNP. In the sections above, we touched upon some of these issues: the public perceives the police to be inefficient and corrupt; this in turn means they do not believe that they will get justice; they feel disenchanted with the police's ability to investigate their case, or they do not have sufficient resources to pay the police to investigate, or both. It is clear that the police are failing to protect all citizens and to live up to the public's expectations of what a functional police force should do. These inadequacies of the police lead people to turn to alternative structures for justice.

Prepared for quick justice

We were walking towards our car when we suddenly heard yelling in front of us. A few seconds later, a group of young men came running from behind us towards the yelling. They were carrying shovels, sticks and iron pipes, among other things. As we got closer, we saw a group of men standing around in a circle. Some were pushing each other, others were trying to hold people apart. I asked my friend what was going on. She approached the group of men and one of them told her they had all run down here to beat up a thief, but as it turned out, nobody had stolen anything. The commotion started when a motorcycle taxi rider had gotten into an argument with a customer. The crowd quickly dispersed again, but the example shows just how prepared the community members were to take punitive action into their own hands.

Communities have increasingly begun to take matters into their own hands or turn to parallel authority structures and alternative justice systems such as traditional 'bush law', 'quick justice' and vigilante groups to protect themselves, settle disputes and investigate crime[40]. Walking around the markets or town and seeing a group of people beating up a suspected thief is no rarity. In some communities, crimes and other legal disputes are solved by the elders in a traditional manner and in some cases, as touched on above, the police themselves function as mediators in local matters. It often happens that police officers skip their actual assigned work and go into a local community, wearing their uniform, and receive payment to settle disputes, thus mixing up the roles of the executive and judicial branches of government.

The main problems with vigilantism and bush justice are that they seldom entail a fair trial to determine guilt, and that their methods of punishment are often cruel, inhumane and degrading. They are often based in moral orders rather than legal ones. While there are good reasons for vigilantism – a malfunctioning formal criminal justice system and the absence of financial insurance plans mean there is little hope of otherwise redressing wrongs, retrieving lost property or being compensated for it[41] – fair trial is certainly not one of them.

40   Interview with CSO representative April 7th, 2016.
41   BUUR, Lars; JENSEN, Steffen. Introduction: vigilantism and the policing of everyday life in South Africa. African Studies, 2004, 63.2: 139-152; BAKER, Bruce. Security in post-conflict Africa: the role of non-state policing. CRC Press, 2009.

According to a source in the UN the primary problem with bush law and quick justice is that it undermines the rule of law and democracy, as it gives the powers of judgment and punishment to people who were not democratically elected, such as village elders and village chiefs, who might not pass judgment based on official laws or human rights principles. An accused who is subjected to 'quick justice' on the spot is thus denied a fair trial where his or her guilt has to be proved before punishment can take place.

Justice through fire

Ever since the government of Liberia in 2013 restricted where motorcycle taxis can commercialize in Monrovia, there have been tensions between the motorbike taxi riders and the police who enforce the governments' restrictions. Peter, a member of a local motorcyclist union, told DIGNITY that he and the other motorcyclists feel extremely neglected and mistreated by the government; the police continuously extort money from them, and they never assist them when they have problems. For a long time, the motorcyclists were in conflict with big, yellow American imported school buses that function as ordinary buses in Monrovia. The buses had caused many accidents with motorcyclists, who call the buses killer beans. In 2013 a motorcyclist was killed by a killer bean on the outskirts of Monrovia. This led to a riot among the cyclists, and they burned the bus. Stephen explained that the cyclists burned the bus because they felt that it was the only way of achieving some justice.

Later in 2015 the motorcycle taxis were again in the limelight. This time a cyclist had allegedly been killed by a police officer who hit him with his baton while he was driving (a quite common practice according to Peter). As the police denied responsibility and did not investigate the case a group of motorcyclists set the police station on fire. Again, they claimed this was the only way of achieving justice.

Another result of dissatisfaction with the LNP is that violence against the police is on the increase. Community members have started intervening to prevent police making arrests, and there have been several incidents of aggression towards police officers, and even of burning down police stations[42]. This is problematic in several ways: not only does it further underline citizens' lack of trust in the police and undermine their image as the legitimate law-enforcing power; it erodes human rights, as violence is seen as a legitimate tool to use against people, both civilians and police officers.

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42   Interview with CSO representative April 6th, 2016.

Sub-Conclusion

The right to a fair trial is a foundation stone in the international human rights edifice. All individuals, according to both the UDHR and the Liberian constitution have the right to a fair trial before receiving punishment. However, extensive corruption combined with an inefficient and malfunctioning criminal justice system has led to a profound lack of trust in the LNP and in the prospect of a just outcome to a situation in general. This increasingly leads to situations where ordinary citizens take it upon themselves to act as judges. This in turn legitimizes the use of violence and increases the risk of punishing people who are innocent. Additionally, it reveals a hazardous breakdown in the rule of law as non-state forms of punishment are increasingly normalized. This reveals a failure on behalf of the LNP regarding their obligation "to combat ill-treatment at the hands of non-state actors, including harmful traditional practices" as declared in the Convention Against Torture.[43]

43   see General Assembly A/72/178

Billboards hovering the streets of Monrovia urging citizens to fight corruption.

6. Oversight

Legal framework

Civilian oversight of the police is an effective method for building trust and confidence in the police institution, as it helps, in theory, to ensure that police are held accountable for their actions. Further, oversight may serve as a deterrent to malfeasance by police, as the risk of facing consequences for engaging in unlawful practices could persuade a police officer to stay within the bounds of the law. In relation to the lack of trust in police in Liberia and the rampant corruption, there is a desperate need for improved oversight and accountability.

Human Rights Standards

While police oversight is not an obligation within the human rights framework, the existence of effective oversight bodies is an important component for ensuring that human rights standards are upheld and respected by police officers.

According to the OHCHR Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials[44]:

    i.   Law enforcement officials shall at all times fulfil the duty imposed upon them by law, by serving the community and by protecting all persons against illegal acts, consistent with the high degree of responsibility required by their profession.

    ii.   Law enforcement shall be representative of and responsive and accountable to the community as a whole.

    iii.   Superior officials shall be held responsible for the actions of police under their command if the superior knew or should have known of abuses but failed to take action.

    iv.   Officials who refuse superior orders shall be given immunity.

    v.   All police are to be subject to continuous and effective report and review procedures.

Domestic law

Police oversight of the LNP exists at a number of levels. Section 3 of the 2016 National Police Act calls for effective civilian oversight of the LNP[45]. Similarly, the LNP Duty Manual includes respect for human rights as one of the core principles of the LNP, under section 1.1[46]. It calls on LNP officers to "never lose sight of the need for legality, necessity, non-discrimination, proportionality and humanity," and to "reinforce a respect for human rights" in approaching their duties.

    1.   <u>Office of the Ombudsman:</u> The 2014 Code of Conduct establishes the Office of the Ombudsman, which is an independent, autonomous body, responsible for enforcement, oversight, monitoring and evaluation of adherence to the Code of Conduct[47].

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44   United Nations
45   Liberia National Police Act (2016)
46   LNP Duty Manual (2008)
47   National Code of Conduct, http://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/Act_Legislature_Prescribing_A_National_Code%20of_Conduct%20(Final_Version%202014).pdf

2. <u>Professional Standards Division (PSD):</u> The PSD, set up in 2006, is mandated to carry out the following duties and responsibilities, among others: receive, record and investigate any complaint or information alleging LNP misconduct; inspect, assess and evaluate LNP systems; report on all cases of police misconduct; establish a mechanism for the distribution of rules and regulations, policies and procedures; provide for periodic review and revision of these regulations as necessary; and ensure that sufficient opportunity for redress of any imposed sanction is provided to subject LNP officers [48]. What document is being quoted here? I tried to find it online because it seemed that some words were missing in the list of mandates, hope I understood correctly - AS

3. <u>LNP Civilian Complaints Review Board:</u> The National Police Act of 2016 establishes the Liberia National Police Civilian Complaints Review Board. It is meant to provide oversight of the police alongside the Professional Standards Division of the LNP. The Board is mandated to "receive, process and determine any complaint made against the Liberia National Police, any Police Officer or Civilian Personnel."[49]

Practice

According to a UN report from 2012, there was still much work to be done to strengthen the weak and ineffective governance and accountability mechanisms of security institutions. On paper, there are a number of bodies to ensure oversight of the LNP, with varying structures and setups, as described above. However, at the time of writing only the PSD was operational. The office of the ombudsman has been established, but has yet to start operating while the Civilian Complaints Review Board has yet to be established. The hope is that the establishment of the two offices will increase accountability and diminish police corruption and impunity in the country. Thus, the focus in this paper is on the PSD.

The Professional Standards Division, PSD, provides oversight of the police. It is not an independent organ, but a part of the police institution. As the HRW report mentions, there has been a great improvement in people's perceptions of accountability within the police force since the establishment of the PSD in 2006. Civil society representatives also expressed high levels of trust in the PSD and although they would have preferred it to be independent of the police, they did not consider the dependency to be a problem in relation to impunity and accountability. Officers in both the PSD and the PTA, as well as CSO workers, had expected the structure of the PSD to change this to change with the implementation of the New Police Act, which was signed in April of 2016.

The director of the PSD mentioned that the lack of independence from the police institution could be a problem, but his overall impression was that they were trusted and considered credible by the public. He understood the increasing number of complaints the PSD was receiving as a proof of this trust. In 2015 the PSD received 768 complaints and by March 2016 they had already received 195 complaints. He further reasoned that improved accessibility played a part in this. In 2014 the PSD launched a text message service, which allowed citizens to use their mobile phones to text a message to the PSD, who then would call the complainant and record their grievance. As internet access is expensive this initiative was a great success, as

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48   Liberia National Police Act, §22.91.
49   Liberia National Police Act

confirmed by representatives of local civil society organizations. However, funding for the text service was provided by a foreign NGO and not the Liberian state, and unfortunately it ran out in May 2016. In fact, most of the funding for office supplies – including computers, furniture and air-conditioning – at the PSD come from the UNDP and the American Embassy, and not from the state budget, which may constitute a problem in the long term.

The main challenge of the PSD, as expressed by the director himself and in interviews with others, is insufficient funds. In general, the police budget has been shrinking over the past years and the PSD are badly affected by these budget cuts. Although the PSD has decentralized to other parts of Liberia, they are still not as accessible as they would like to be. There are currently 19 PSD officers in Monrovia and 20 in the rest of the country. When filing a complaint people thus often have to travel far, not only to file the compliant, but also to follow up on the case, which is both time-consuming and expensive. By the end of 2015, 131 of the 768 cases had not been investigated because the complainant had been unable to follow up with the PSD on the case. According to sources in the UN and in the PSD, this increases the use of 'bush law', where people take their cases to local authorities instead of the formal system.

The inadequate budget also means a crippling lack of tools for the PSD. Like the rest of the police force they lack vehicles, uniforms, investigative tools, and enough staff to undertake investigations. According to the director of the PSD, in March of 2016 they were still investigating 186 out of 768 dockets from 2015. To help speed up the case by saving their officers some time, they would ask the complainant him/herself to write up the report. Although the PSD officers were aware that this was problematic, they saw no other solution. The procedure time according to the law is supposed to be 21 days, but the backlog mentioned above indicates that this is an impossible target, given their resource constraints. The director explained that the long processing time was highly inconvenient for complainants, who can ill afford the time and money to follow up, especially if they live outside Monrovia.

Sub-Conclusion

It is clear that in Liberia there is a need for better oversight of police, especially now that the UNMIL monitoring has stopped. While the Civilian Complaints Review Board envisaged in the New Police Act, NPA, is an important development, there are serious and legitimate concerns. For one thing, the board is likely to face the same budgetary constraints in its functioning that plague the rest of the LNP, as described above. In August 2016, UNMIL was in the process of providing expert assistance in the drafting of regulations and administrative instructions for the Civilian Complaints Review Board, indicating that steps were being taken by relevant parties to bring the board into reality. The board could go a long way in mitigating the concerns that the Professional Services Division does not exercise sufficient independence to provide effective oversight, although whether this will be the case in reality is yet to be seen. Likewise, while an ombudsman should be a major development in increasing accountability and preventing impunity, we have yet to witness its effect.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

In this paper, we have explored some of the discrepancies between normative frameworks and practices in relation to policing in Liberia. Focusing on fair trial, corruption and civilian oversight, the paper illustrates that while progress has been made, there is still a long way to go before policing practice is aligned with the normative legal frameworks. But while there are serious challenges, the research indicates there is cause for optimism, as there is political will in Liberia to address these discrepancies. The main problems remain lack of resources and capacity. Hence, there are important roles for both civil society and for the international community.

Billboards hovering the streets of Monrovia urging citizens to fight corruption.

As shown throughout this paper, one of the key problems of the LNP is the public's lack of trust in the institution. This stems from years of civil war and conflict, when the police force was an instrument of political control and could not be trusted to protect the civilian population. The remnants of this mistrust are today fueled by obvious police corruption, lack of capacity to investigate crime, rumors of police committing crimes themselves, and a lack of accountability and punishment for police misconduct. The mistrust leads civilians to take justice into their own hands, and turning their backs on the democratic criminal justice system. Besides revealing a breakdown in the rule of law, by failing to prevent ill-treatment at the hands of non-state actors, the LNP are failing to comply with the Convention Against Torture.

While sources in the UN agree that the Liberian security sector is still fragile, they believe the general lack of confidence in the security sector could be related to the UNMIL's priorities in its work over the past 14 years. As the nation was completely devastated after

the war the UNMIL focused primarily on (re-)building the institutions at the expense of building trust relations between citizens and the government.[50] Hence, citizens still have to learn to trust the police. On the positive side, the extensive combined international and domestic efforts to implement reforms in the security sector in Liberia have led to significant developments so far, not least the adoption of the new police legislation, the National Police Act of 2016, as well as the adoption of the Strategic Plan 2015-2020.

However, despite Herculean efforts of both the international community and the Liberian government, the public's lack of trust in the police is still a major problem, and one that will take much more time, money and effort to change. The general perception is that police are not fully living up to their responsibility, and the corruption that people experience almost daily does little to shake the perception that police are there only to serve the rich.

- This paper has shown that a problematic area is the lack of effective oversight of the police, despite the existence of the Professional Standards Division. This is due only partly to its lack of independence from the LNP structure, in other words that police officers have to investigate complaints against their colleagues. In the main, its worst problems are that it is underfunded, understaffed, under-resourced and burdened with unrealistic targets. Some of the PSD's independence problems may be somewhat mitigated by the establishment of the Civilian Complaints Review Board; however, the extent of this will only be known once the board is fully operational.

- One of the biggest challenges facing the LNP more widely, however, is the lack of resources—both human and financial. This contributes to high levels of corruption within the LNP, an issue that plagues most areas of the Liberian government structure, and in turn reduces the levels of protection that citizens can expect.

- The previous DIGNITY legal study[51] revealed the absence of a clear and robust legal and policy framework for the protection of human rights, indicating that Liberian legislation was not fully in line with international standards. This, combined with the widespread corruption, informal justice practices and continued problems with oversight in the LNP discussed in this paper, severely undermine the ability of police to ensure the protection of human rights in Liberia.

Recommendations to civil society:

1. **Advocate for closing the gaps between domestic and international legal and policy frameworks relating to fair trial standards.** Domestic legal and policy frameworks should be assessed, and steps should be taken, for example through advocacy efforts and dialogues with authorities, to ensure that relevant international human rights standards relating to fair trial are accurately reflected in such documents.

2. **Advocate for the implementation of international human rights standards through domestic legal and policy frameworks beyond custodial settings.** Through advocacy and dialogue with authorities, work to improve implementation of relevant domestic legal and policy frameworks relating to policing. This could include finding creative ways to use policy documents, such as codes of conduct

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50   Interview at the Security Sector Reform Unit at the UNMIL April 14th, 2016.

51   Prud'Homme du Hancourt et al.

and policing manuals, to work towards greater respect for international human rights standards. Particular attention should also be paid to strengthening oversight mechanisms which could play a significant role in ensuring better implementation of international standards through the application of domestic legal and policy frameworks.

3. **Engage with the LNP to carry out trainings and workshops focused on steps that should be taken to contribute to the building of public trust and confidence in the police.** Engagement with the LNP must be focused on creating sustainable partnerships and dialogue with the top tier of the institution as well as with mid-level management (for instance station commanders) who are often closer to the practices of everyday extra-custodial policing practices. Such dialogue and engagement should refrain from only pointing out shortcomings and begin from the understanding that there are reasons for the practices, even though they are unacceptable and unproductive.

Recommendations to the international community present in Liberia:

1. **Continue to work comprehensively and concretely on efforts to combat corruption.** Rampant corruption plays a central role in eroding public confidence and trust in public institutions, and in particular in the police.

2. **Prioritize funding and support for the Civilian Complaints Review Board.** This body can play an important role in providing much needed effective oversight of the police, if it is provided with the necessary financial and other resources to carry out its function effectively.

3. **Advocate for closing the gaps between domestic and international legal and policy frameworks relating to fair trial standards.** Domestic legal and policy frameworks should be assessed, and steps should be taken, for example through advocacy efforts and dialogues with authorities, to ensure that relevant international human rights standards relating to fair trial are accurately reflected in such documents.

Further readings:

Prud'homme du Hancourt, Jo-Anne et al. 2018. Legal Study on Policing and Human Rights Standards: Internationally and in Three Countries of the Global South (South Africa, the Philippines and Liberia.

MMCs position paper

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The Global Alliance is a strategic alliance established in 2014 between likeminded civil society organisations working towards building a global alliance of communities against torture and urban violence. We conduct country-based, as well as collaborative intervention and knowledge generating projects across partners, focusing on countering authority-based violence in poor urban neighbourhoods.

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LAPS – Liberia Association of Psychosocial Services, Liberia;
www.lapsliberia.com

DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture, Denmark;
www.dignityinstitute.org