

## Liberia

At the end of 2010, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), in its seventh year of operation, continued to play a critical role in Liberia's postconflict recovery. With presidential and legislative elections slated for 2011 and with UNMIL's expected further drawdown and withdrawal after the installation of the next government, all eyes are on Liberian state institutions, especially the police and judiciary, which are still unprepared to assume full responsibility for provision of law and order. A central challenge for UNMIL in providing security and training during 2010 was to avoid overshadowing the capacity of the government of Liberia (GoL) and not substituting for it. While the mission does not have an executive mandate, the challenge is to balance increased training and support to national institutions while simultaneously reducing operational dependency.

With both domestic and regional threats abounding, including ethnic and communal tensions, high unemployment, criminality, drug and human trafficking, corruption, and political violence in neighboring countries, there was uncertainty about the GoL's ability to autonomously manage these myriad threats. Bearing these factors in mind, the Security Council renewed UNMIL's mandate in September 2010 for an additional twelve months and authorized it to provide support for the elections in 2011. Nevertheless, international pressure to drawdown UNMIL's significant military and police components continued to mount throughout the year, heightening pressure to develop national Liberian capacity.

### Background

From bases in Côte d'Ivoire, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and its leader, Charles Taylor, invaded Liberia in 1989, sparking a civil war that in its first eight years claimed more than 150,000—mostly civilian—lives, injured thousands more, and displaced nearly a million people. After the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) helped broker a peace agreement in 1993, the Security Council established the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) to assist the ECOWAS Military Observer Group, ECOMOG, implement the terms of the peace. In 1997, Charles Taylor was elected president, formed a government, and UNOMIL withdrew. Five months later, in November 1997, the UN launched the UN Peacebuilding Support Office in Liberia (UNOL), the first of its kind. However, the civil war resumed after the lingering problems of political exclusion, national reconciliation, and an ill-prepared security sector went unaddressed.

#### UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

Authorization and Start Date	19 September 2003 (UNSC Res. 1509)
SRSG	Ellen Margrethe Løj (Denmark)
Force Commander	Major-General Muhammad Khalid (Pakistan)
Police Commissioner	Gautam Sawang (India)
Budget	\$524.1 million (1 July 2010–30 June 2011)
Strength as of 31 October 2010	Troops: 7,931 Military Observers: 134 Police: 1,304 International Civilian Staff: 432 Local Civilian Staff: 984 UN Volunteers: 225

*For detailed mission information see p. 258*

In August 2003, the brutal, fourteen-year conflict was finally brought to an end with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Accra, Ghana. The civil war killed an estimated 250,000 people, displaced one-third of the population, and left the country in ruins physically, institutionally, and economically. On 18 August 2003, peace talks between the Taylor government and the two rebel groups, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), led to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and to the agreement by President Taylor to go into exile in Nigeria. The CPA provided for the establishment of a National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) until the election of a new government at the end of 2005. The CPA also requested the United Nations to deploy a peace-keeping force to Liberia under Chapter VII of the Charter to support the NTGL and assist in the implementation of the peace agreement. By its Resolution 1509 (2003), the Security Council established UNMIL with an authorized strength of 15,000 troops, including 3,500 re-hatted ECOWAS troops, and 1,115 police personnel.

UNMIL has a multidimensional mandate that authorizes it to provide security, while assisting in laying the foundations for a lasting peace. UNMIL is mandated to support the implementation of the cease-fire agreement; develop and implement a DDR program; protect UN personnel as well as civilians under imminent threat of physical violence; facilitate humanitarian assistance; support security sector reform, in particular police reform; assist in the reestablishment of national authority throughout the country; and assist in national elections, which were held in 2005 and placed President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in office. With the withdrawal of UNAMSIL in neighboring Sierra Leone, UNMIL was given the additional task of securing the Special Court for Sierra Leone in Freetown, since 2005. Also, since September 2009, the mission had an additional mandated task of supporting the 2011 national elections.

In his report on UNMIL (S/2007/479) of 8 August 2007, the Secretary-General recommended a three-stage drawdown of UNMIL's



military component. By Resolution 1777 (2007) of 20 September 2007, the Security Council approved the first stage of the Secretary-General's recommendation, which led to the repatriation of some 2,450 troops from October 2007 to October 2008, leaving the troop level at 11,691. By its Resolution 1836 (2008) of 29 September 2008, the Security Council authorized the second stage of the drawdown, including a reduction of the mission's military component by 1,460 troops between September 2008 and March 2009, leaving UNMIL's troop strength at 10,231; streamlining UNMIL's military sectors from four to two; maintaining the strength of the police advisers; and increasing the number of formed police units from five to seven. The Security Council approved the third stage of UNMIL's drawdown by its Resolution 1885 (2009) of 15 September 2009, which involved the repatriation of 2,029 troops, three attack helicopters, and 72 armoured personnel carriers by May 2010, leaving 7,952 troops in Liberia. In February 2010, UNMIL reduced its 250-strong military guard force deployed at the Special Court for Sierra Leone by 100 personnel, and will retain 150 troops until the Special Court completes its work. UNMIL's strength at the end of its drawdown phase in May 2010 is

8,101 military and 1,375 police personnel. No further drawdown is envisaged until after the installation of the next government in January 2012.

Further, significant progress was made in 2009: the Liberian Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration Program (DDRR) was closed, reporting more than 101,000 disarmed and demobilized and 90,000 assisted; US contractors implementing the reform of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) handed over responsibility to Liberia's Ministry of Defense; and the final report of the 2003 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was released.

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## Key Developments

### *Political Situation*

Activities in preparation for the 2011 presidential and legislative elections dominated political developments in 2010. There was intense debate over reapportionment of electoral districts that deadlocked passage of the so-called Threshold Bill in the legislature. The bill, which was twice vetoed by President Johnson Sirleaf, would have given the National Elections Commission (NEC) the ability to redraw electoral districts according to the 2008 census. Instead, a compromise bill was passed that retains the sixty-four districts from the 2005 elections and grants nine new legislative seats to more populated counties. The elections are presently scheduled for 11 October 2011, but could be held the first week of November if a referendum planned for August 2011 seeking to amend election-related aspects of the constitution passes. Managing election-related disputes and peacefully resolving political tensions were and will continue to be a top priority. Underscoring the importance of this, many recalled that disputed elections results have led to widespread violence in the past, as in 1985 and 1997.

Unlike the elections held in 2005 (which were implemented with enormous UNMIL and other key UN and international partner support) the 2011 elections are being planned with the view to exploit all national capabilities first before relying on UNMIL. The burden will be

on the government to demonstrate its capacity to hold elections on its own.

While the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released its final report in June 2009, the GoL has not yet implemented the recommendations as a part of overall national reconciliation. President Sirleaf has requested the Ministry of Justice and the Law Reform Commission to analyze the report for its legal implications, but no formal structures have been established. The Independent National Commission on Human Rights, which according to the TRC Act has a role in ensuring that the TRC's recommendations are implemented, was established, but is not yet operational.

In 2010, Liberia arrived at an important milestone not only for its overall economic health but its viability as a state: it reached the completion point under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC), prompting a cancellation of \$4.6 billion in external debt. This achievement will open up opportunities for the GoL to access international credit and seek investment for development.

Anticorruption efforts continued, despite the acrimonious debates surrounding the General Audit Commission's ministerial audits. While certain ministries were audited in order to reach HIPC completion, some ministers leveled criticisms at the Commission. With lackluster public and ministry support, the overall anticorruption effort was tarnished.

Unemployment remained a key obstacle to sustained economic recovery and stability. A related concern is incomplete reintegration of former combatants who do not have sustainable livelihoods. Finding employment for these groups and the burgeoning youth population will remain vital for securing the fragile stability.

### *Security Situation*

As in previous years, 2010 was characterized by a relatively stable security situation, despite some flare-ups of violence among extant ethnic and communal tensions and criminal activity. In Nimba County, in the northeastern part of the country ethnic conflicts over land remained common. In Lofa County, widespread violence erupted between the Mandingo and Lorma

communities in February 2010, killing four and wounding many more. Buildings were destroyed, including mosques and churches, and more than fifty prisoners escaped from the local prison. UNMIL peacekeepers supported Liberian police, including the armed Emergency Response Unit, to quell the violence, underscoring the inability of the GoL security sector to independently respond to domestic threats to stability. Clashes also erupted in Maryland County in the southeastern tip of Liberia, demonstrating that potential for violent contestation remains throughout the country.

UNMIL continued to closely monitor the situations in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire due to their potential to impact regional instability and undermine the fragile gains in peace and stability in Liberia. Some 2,000 Liberian former combatants in Côte d'Ivoire are associated Ivoirian militias. However, a joint UNMIL, UNOCI, and UNDP field mission in June concluded that they did not pose an immediate threat to Liberia's stability.

Rape and armed robbery continued to pose a significant security threat to the civilian population of Liberia, as did increases in both drug and human trafficking. Liberia's weak security institutions and porous borders left the country vulnerable to exploitation by transnational criminal networks. Furthermore, GoL's weak law-enforcement capabilities and inadequate legislation meant that crimes are often committed with impunity. To fill these gaps, UNMIL continued to engage in joint border operations with Guinea, Sierra Leone, and ONUCI. However, building the capacity of the government to mitigate these threats remained the top priority. A welcomed move in this regard was the February 2010 GoL signing of the Freetown Commitment of the West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI). The commitment endorsed the practical implementation of WACI's mandate for cooperative crime-fighting among West African states alongside the UN and other international partners.

### *Security and Justice Reform*

Strengthening Liberia's security and justice sectors continued to rank primarily as an operational focus for UNMIL throughout 2010.

Enormous obstacles remain. The problems of poor infrastructure, shortages of qualified personnel, and financial gaps continue to hamper the development of a credible justice sector, while predatory police services and lax oversight mechanisms prevented the consolidation of an accountable, just, and professional security sector. With an average salary of around US\$80 per month, a culture of professionalism has failed to take root among Liberian National Police (LNP) officers, who remain prone to extortion and bribes, especially at checkpoints.

To address police misconduct, UNMIL began in April 2010 preparation for a database to record incidents of LNP abuse, and the minister of justice signed the Professional Standards Division Policy and Procedure to increase accountability. Public-relations campaigns and community-policing training programs, supported by UNMIL, the UN Peacebuilding Fund, and UNDP, assisted during the year in improving the public's confidence in the LNP. One reason cited for the LNP's dismal support among the population is that its ranks were not subjected to the same robust vetting and training as that of the AFL, carried out by two US private security companies: DynCorp and Pacific Architects Engineers (PAE). Many Liberians are still afraid to report crimes out of fear that they will face reprisals without the guarantee of LNP protection.

With this reality in mind, UNMIL's main focus in 2010, despite budget constraints, was increasing the strength and readiness of the LNP for the 2011 elections. The Emergency Response Unit (ERU), an armed corps of officers whose role is vital in reacting to armed robbery, violence, and other crimes, reached a strength of 344 in 2010. The focus, however, was to prioritize growing the Police Support Unit from its current 150 officers to 600 by June 2011, ahead of the elections. Unlike the bulk of the LNP, these officers would be armed. Training these additional units and maintaining the current ones will require more funding and UNMIL support than currently exists. Supplying barracks, infrastructure, vehicles, and specialized equipment to the new forces will remain a challenge. The ERU struggled to maintain an operational fleet in 2010.

### Box 2.4 Women, Peace, and Security: A Decade of Resolution 1325

In light of the tenth anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the UN began to review the inclusion of a gender perspective in peace operations in an effort to accelerate progress and assess the challenges still facing robust implementation. The landmark resolution called for the integration of women into the peace and security processes and has since been complemented with three additional resolutions—1820, 1888, and 1889—in order to better support women in every stage of the peace process and ensure their security.

This past year saw a series of events meant to commemorate the anniversary, including Global Open Days organized by DPKO, UNIFEM, UNDP, and DPA. These meetings helped bring together women's organizations with UN officials to engage in dialogues about pressing issues for women and their priorities for peace. More than 1,500 women from countries as diverse as Afghanistan, Croatia, and Sri Lanka were able to meet with Special Representatives of the Secretary-General to discuss problems with sexual and gender-based violence, the need for better monitoring and evaluation, and access to timely information.

In addition, the Open Days brought attention to the effort to increase women's inclusion in the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding phases. The Secretary-General issued a report in September on the initiative as well, outlining seven commitments meant to ensure that women's priorities are addressed,

including the provision of security, adequate financing, and a systematic inclusion of women in each stage of the process. The report further urged member states to act with consistency and coherence in implementation, but acknowledged the difficulties ahead in attaining the resources and the security necessary to enable significant action.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon also pledged that the UN would lead by example in implementing Resolution 1325, citing the growing number of women in decisionmaking positions such as Special Representatives and Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General as proof of its successful advances. Other areas seem promising as well, including the effort to increase the number of women serving as UN police personnel in peace operations. Bangladesh and India have each deployed all-female police forces, and the UN is gradually moving toward their target of having women comprise 20 percent of the force.

Progress, however, has been uneven and inconsistent at times. August's mass rapes in the Congo highlighted some of the gaps that still threaten women's security, while the Open Days dialogue revealed the dearth of financial resources, especially those that focus on the education and economic development of women. Furthermore, the increase in the incorporation of gender issues into peace agreements is contrasted by the fact that less than a quarter of these agreements contain specific provisions.

The Security Council's Open Debate in October additionally highlighted some of the issues stunting full implementation. Michelle Bachelet, making her first appearance as executive director of the newly formed UN Women, commended the preparation the UN has done, but urged a shift from policy to action. Despite the call for tangible commitments from member states during the debate, the majority opted out, choosing only to reaffirm their commitment and intentions to support Resolution 1325 instead of guaranteeing any measurable action. The event did lead to the adoption of twenty-six indicators meant to track future progress in order to help fill in the data gaps that have made assessment difficult so far.

Looking to build on the momentum of the anniversary and create a plan for moving forward into the next decade, the Security Council agreed to hold a high-level review in 2015 to renew commitment to Resolution 1325, assess the progress on all levels, and address continuing obstacles. It also signaled its intention to integrate the indicators put forth by the Secretary-General to monitor implementation, and called for annual reporting and a strategic framework to further guide the UN forward. Some women's organizations, for their part, are hoping the decade to come will be one of strong action and measurable progress in order to create the change that is needed.

In an effort to meld the formal and customary justice mechanisms, a national conference supported by UNMIL was held in April on enhancing access to justice, with a focus on ending harmful practices in the customary system and ending corruption in the formal system. Similarly, UNMIL backed the Ministry of

Justice's efforts to address the backlogs in the justice system and harmonize the relationship between the police and prosecutors. To address the high number of reported rape cases and reports of human trafficking, a joint GoL and UN program on sexual and gender-based violence delivered training to security personnel at

borders to prevent and respond to this type of violence.

Corrections facilities continued to be plagued by inadequate funding, low staffing levels, and poor infrastructure. As a result, jail-breaks continued to occur, as the incident in Lofa County in February 2010 demonstrated. Without adequate recourse to justice, disputes continue to be settled through violence and vigilantism, with potential to spread to mobs.

UNMIL began enhanced training and mentoring in line with the government's national defense strategy that aims for independent operability of the AFL by 2012. Sixty-one US military personnel currently serve as defense sector reform mentors for the AFL. They provide training in infantry tactics, operational planning, engineering, logistics, military justice, administration, medical services, and communications. The United States continued to control the AFL's weapons and ammunition, although preparations are under way for the army to eventually take responsibility for their own armaments.

Lack of Liberian leadership by top military officers remained problematic in 2010. Seconded officers from ECOWAS member states remained in leadership positions in the AFL. With a few incidents of AFL misconduct and violence against civilians occurring in 2010, the AFL has much to accomplish before it can earn the population's trust and regain full responsibility.

#### *Preparations for UNMIL Drawdown*

On 8 October 2010, the UN Country Team, UNMIL, and other actors endorsed "Delivering as One"—the concept that aims to enhance the UN system's delivery of assistance to Liberia. It is believed that this move will facilitate UNMIL's transition, better coordinate aid activities, and enhance GoL ownership.

On 16 October 2010 following a request from the GoL, the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) formally adopted Liberia to the PBC's agenda, making it the fifth country added and the first with peacekeeping troops on the ground. Jordan's ambassador, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al-Husseini, was elected as chair of the country-specific configuration.



Members of the Nigerian contingent of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) stand at attention during a ceremony marking the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers in Monrovia, Liberia, 28 May 2010.

UN Photo/Staron R. Winter

Moving forward, the priority is the development of a strategic agenda for peacebuilding in the country, one that ideally will follow after UNMIL's withdrawal. To this end, the GoL has emphasized to the commission that rule of law, security sector reform, and national reconciliation are top priorities.

In July, following discussions about the upcoming UNMIL transition held in Monrovia, facilitated by the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum, the National Security Council formally announced the creation of a joint transition planning working group, with both UN and GoL representatives. The working group began a situational assessment of the GoL's capacities and gaps, with a particular focus on the security sector. The assessment, which includes a comprehensive threat analysis, will ultimately provide for optimal prioritization of activities to strengthen the GoL's security institutions. In preparation for these assessments, UNMIL, in early 2010, submitted a list of tasks it performs to the GoL.

In preparation for UNMIL's phased withdrawal, addressing the lack of an over-the-horizon force will remain problematic. In Sierra Leone,

for instance, the UK and UNMIL acted as guarantors of security as UNAMSIL withdrew, and Australia similarly provided this role in Timor-Leste as UNTAET left that country. Furthermore, beyond the potential for a relapse into conflict, UNMIL's presence has been cited as a factor for foreign companies' investment in the Liberia. Encouraging investment—a fundamental component of Liberia's long-term economic sustainability—will be difficult without security guarantees.

Managing public expectations has also been recognized as a critical part of the transition planning. There have been discussions about the need to pursue a robust public-information campaign to secure the Liberian public's support for Liberian security institutions in the wake of UNMIL's security cover. The UN must not appear to be abandoning Liberians. Managing all of the related impacts of UNMIL's departure will require concerted action, but the real test rests on the ability of Liberian state institutions to provide security and rule of law.

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### **Conclusion**

Liberia will remain fragile unless the country's security and justice institutions can provide for

the population and deliver on their responsibilities. Peace and stability in the country are currently being sustained through the security guarantee and services provided by UNMIL. The 2011 elections processes will provide a significant political test of the progress made in Liberia. Much work remained to be done, including preparing for the technical and logistical challenges involved in conducting the elections and the institutional and security challenges that a contentious vote could unleash. Indeed, there are uncertainties about the government of Liberia's capacity to manage the political and social tensions that the elections may bring about.

Seven years since its initial deployment, UNMIL ranks among the larger peacekeeping missions deployed by the UN, representing a significant draw on resources. During 2010 this elicited pressure from the international community for UNMIL to complete its withdrawal and transition to a much lighter presence by 2012, despite slow development of Liberian security and judicial institutions. Registering major progress in these areas will be a main operational focus in the coming year and will be the cornerstone to a stable Liberia following UNMIL's exit.