

H. E. Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
President of Liberia
Executive Mansion
Capitol Hill, Monrovia
Republic of Liberia

UNISON Centre,
130 Euston Road,
LONDON NW1 2AY

Tel: +44 20 7121 5767
Fax: +44 20 7121 5101

By email: ebfasama@emansion.gov.lr,
etoles@emansion.gov.lr

www.unison.org.uk
Email: I.Relations@unison.co.uk

Thursday, 17 November, 2016

Dear Madame President,

We wish to express grave concerns over the situation of workers in the health sector in Liberia, and in particular the dismissals of Joseph S. Tamba and George Poe Williams, President and General Secretary of the National Health Workers Association of Liberia (NAHWAL), respectively.

Joseph S. Tamba and George Poe Williams were dismissed in February 2014 following a nationwide strike in protest against the bad working conditions in the health sector. These poor working conditions had fatal consequences: the lack of protective equipment, the long working hours and the lack of medication in the fight against Ebola caused hundreds of deaths amongst health workers. On top of this, workers who continued risking their lives did not always get their salary and risk allowance. There was no consequent support system for Ebola survivor health workers or for the families of the deceased workers.

The case of Tamba and Williams does not stand alone. It is one extreme example of the lack of respect for trade union rights and the right to organise in the public sector by your government. In addition:

- In contradiction with ILO conventions 87 and 98, and although the right to organise is recognised by the Liberian constitution, your government has made it illegal for public services workers to organise and form or join a union by excluding these rights from the Civil Service Standing Orders;
- Union leaders are dismissed, displaced to faraway regions, denied their salary, and workers intimidated;
- At the Roberts International Airport, a collective bargaining agreement was unilaterally cancelled and the union leaders dismissed;
- There have been mass dismissals of teachers who participated in actions against public-private partnerships.
- In a public statement in April you falsely accused Mr Tamba and Mr Williams of leading a strike which caused the deaths of people; there is no evidence of this whatsoever.

UNISON strongly condemns these attacks on NAHWAL and other unions, and urges the Liberian government to resolve this conflict through the recognition of NAHWAL and a clear change in Liberian law recognising public services workers right to form trade unions, in conformity with international standards.



.....
General Secretary Dave Prentis

Joseph S. Tamba and George Poe Williams should be reinstated in their jobs and the government should respect and recognise the work they have done for their country.

UNISON will join with our international organisation Public Services International (PSI) in drawing global attention to this denial of human rights in Liberia. We will support the complaint against Liberia in the International Labour Organisation (ILO). We will also raise with international representatives and with British government representatives in Liberia our concerns.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Prentis". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dave Prentis
General Secretary

cc. Mrs. Bernice Dahn, Minister of Health and Social Welfare, bdahn59@gmail.com
Mr. Neto Zarzar Lighe, Minister of Labour, netoise@yahoo.com
Mr. George K. Werner, Minister of Education, gwerner@moe.gov.lr,
wellehsanyon@hotmail.com
Rosa Pavanelli, General Secretary, Public Services International (PSI),
rosa.pavanelli@world-psi.org
Rt Hon. Boris Johnson MP, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth
Affairs, fcocorrespondence@fco.gov.uk
Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, Secretary of State for International Development,
pssofs@dfid.gov.uk