

Hearing into Malawu Christians and Elders Dispute Convened by Internal Affairs minister Morris M. Dukuly November 18, 2013 (1)

District Hall, Zorzor City, Zorzor District, Lofa County	Speakers	Comments and Conclusions
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>POSITION OF MALAWU ELDERS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ That Dennis Aggrey misled the Malawu Elders from the very beginning, because they (Aggrey & others) went there as humanitarian NGO. ➤ Aggrey did not talk about forming a church, rather went to create love and provide the basic needs of the community including hand pumps, school, town hall, zinc for thatch-roof houses and many others. ➤ Malawu Elders would have refused if the issue of building a church was mentioned, because it is a traditional town, but Church was allowed because of the cordial relationship that existed. ➤ 61 out of 200 residents have joined the church, yet traditional laws of the town were abided by and both Christians and traditional people co-existed. ➤ That the Samaritan Purse International Relief NGO is the sponsor of all projects in Malawu, but being claimed by Christian Revival Church. <p style="text-align: center;"><u>ROOT OF THE CONFLICT</u></p> <p>A Christian woman broke the town's law by burning palm kernel, she was forgiven.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When traditional leaders decided to sprinkle water on each house as form of sacrifice, church youth resisted the act, by preventing their church from being touched. ➤ Citizens were being prevented access to the guest house, church building and certain areas in the town. ➤ That sawn planks intended for use by the community were used on the school building, the balance transported to Monrovia and diverted to Aggrey's personal use. ➤ That Aggrey and others began inciting youth against the traditional elders, saying, "No one must serve Two Masters". Children no longer respect their elders. ➤ That Rice Processing machine intended to generate support for school feeding was diverted to Aggrey's personal property. ➤ Malawu youth are breaking all the rules without any regret or apologies. ➤ Repeated violation of the town's rules led to foot-cuffing of some upon order of the 'Grand Master'. ➤ Instead of Aggrey's peaceful intervention to calm the situation, he defied the elders by announcing he would bring in 150 persons for crusade purpose. ➤ County authorities however prevented the crusade. ➤ Despite the order by County Authority, Aggrey and John Kukuyonyongee entered Malawu, chanting from one house to another. ➤ They assaulted old man called Duyan with Holy Bible, sat at the entrance of the grove chanting pointing the Holy Bible. They showed the Bible to anyone attempting to greet them by hand-shake. ➤ These actions by the two among other things prompted the Grand Master to order their arrest and foot-cuffing, because there is no other jail of punishment for violators like the two. ➤ A position Statement by Elders and Malawu citizens in Liberia and diaspora attached. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ELDERS</u></p> <p>John K. Sumo Land lord</p> <p>Koiwu G. Zaza</p> <p>Sazi G. Wuolewu</p> <p><u>Also present:</u> WolobahNyequoi Zoe Paramount Chief</p> <p>Henry Gobahay Land Paramount Chief</p> <p>Rufus Sumo Town chief</p> <p>GalakpaiBeyan Gen. Town chief</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>CHRISTIANS</u></p> <p>Dennis Aggrey Head</p> <p>Pastor James C. Koiboi Representative Liberia Council of Churches-LCC</p> <p>Pastor Malawu Branch CRC</p> <p>Pastor David Zawu <u>Zorzor Union of Churches</u></p> <p>Past. James C, Koiboi Representative Liberia Council of Churches-LCC</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Zorzor Union of Churches</u></p> <p>The Zorzor Union of Churches headed by Pastor David Zawu, presented a Position Statement on behalf of the Zorzor Christian community (Copy attached).</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Minister Dukuly</u></p> <p>Min Dukuly made these points throughout the two-day meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ That Liberia is a secular state, which means freedom of worship or religion. ➤ The need to accept value of tolerance in the spirit of oneness and reconciliation. ➤ GOL will not aid, abet, encourage or support religious persecution or any form of persecution. ➤ Responding to Aggrey's closing question, Min declared that GOL is charge of the Country and the constitution stands. ➤ Said Mr. Aggrey undermined the elders' authority and inciting the youth against elders of Malawu. ➤ That action by elders to arrest and chain Christians was wrong and will not be encouraged. <p style="text-align: center;"><u>CONCLUSION</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ That President will be briefed on the findings, after which final decisions made will be communicated. ➤ Superintendent Dunor remains in charge until the final decisions. ➤ That all church activities in Malawu be halted in line with earlier moratorium issued by Supt Dunor.



Hearing on Christian and Traditional Elders from Manalu

POSITION OF CHRISTIANS

- Acknowledged being aware of the traditional nature of Malawu before coming to evangelize
- The Christian Revival church was introduced from the beginning in 2008, and also the intention to building church in Malawu was explained and accepted.
- It is during the second visit of Christians the elders declared "no more taking off shoes and blouses before entering Malawu".
- Informed elders that they had gone to build relationship and love.
- Explained the cordial relationship that existed between elders and Christians until Aug 6, 2013, when the "Country Devil" declared that there should no more worship and church activities.
- The 'devil' ordered seizure of the church building, guest house and all properties belonging to the church.
- Elders arrested, foot-cuffed and ban others from the town; seized church's cross, books teaching materials and cattle.
- Efforts by commissioner Wolobah to restore calm only led to release of Christians, but all church activities and some members banned.
- No good result following consultation among citizens in Monrovia. The Christian Revival decided to invite 150 persons for crusade.
- Denied receiving any communication from Supt Dunor which placed moratorium on all church activities until the matter is resolved.
- The crusade was not held, however, admitted that two persons (Aggrey and John Kukuyonyongee) secretly entered Malawu via motorbike.
- Admitted that they behaved unusual "by moving from one house to another chanting 'Jesus is Lord' and showing the Holy Bible to anyone attempting to shake hands".
- They sat on the ground in front of the town chief's house, refusing to move.

- This aggravated the elders, leading to their arrest and foot-cuffing.
- Termed the action by elders as atrocity, abuse, torture and persecution without any protection from GOL.

ROOT OF THE CONFLICT

- The elders feared that the church is recruiting more community members, 61 out of 200.

Mr. Dennis Aggrey concluded by a question: "Who is in charge, government or traditionalists?"

CHRISTIANS' APOLOGY AND RESOLUTION.

- At the end of the two-day hearing, some Christian youth led by the Church Pastor, G. KessellyYoukeh apologized to the elders for the ugly situation and begged for mercy and co-existence.
- They appealed for others who are displaced in Zorzor and for resumption of worship activities.
- Additional apologies came from Min. Dukuly, LCC representative Past. James C. Kolbol, William V. Howard of Lofa Peace Council, Pastor David Zawu head of the Zorzor Union of Churches, Quarud-Gboni Paramount Chief Musa Kamara, Supt George Dunor and other citizens. There was a Position Statement, presented as Resolution (copy attached).

GalakpaiBeyan
Gen. Town chief

CHRISTIANS
Dennis Aggrey
Head
Christian Revival
church, CRC

G. KessellyYoukeh
Pastor
Malawu Branch
CRC

Pastor David Zawu
Zorzor Union of Churches

Past. James C,
Kolbol
Representative
Liberia Council of
Churches-LCC

➤ GOL will not aid, abet, encourage or support religious persecution or any form of persecution.

➤ Responding to Aggrey's closing question, Min declared that GOL is charge of the Country and the constitution stands.

➤ Said Mr. Aggrey undermined the elders' authority and inciting the youth against elders of Malawu.

➤ That action by elders to arrest and chain Christians was wrong and will not be encouraged.

CONCLUSION

That President will be briefed on the findings, after which final decisions made will be communicated.

Superintendent Dunor remains in charge until the final decisions.

That all church activities in Malawu be halted in line with earlier moratorium issued by Supt Dunor.

That action by elders to arrest and chain people is violation of laws of Liberia.

Called on Malawu youth not to be misled by non-Malawu citizens to destroy relationship with their elders.

Minister promised to travel to Malawu upon return to Lofa 2nd Week in January, 2014.



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