



Prepared by: [WHITE & CASE](#)

IFRC COVID-19 Emergency Decree Pro Bono Research: Liberia

White & Case Team: Ingrid York, Elaf Al-Wohaibi, Pranav Subhedar, Natalie So

- *Questions to be answered by close of business Friday, 27 March are listed below.*
- *Please be sure to include English translations of relevant text where possible.*

1. Is there coordination between state and non-state actors, e.g. through a national emergency response mechanism?

It is unclear as to the full level of coordination between state and non-state actors.

The Liberian government's Ministry of Health [declared](#) a national emergency in the regions of Montserrado and Margibi (the "**Ministry of Health Declaration**"), which envisaged severe measures (such as the shutting down of schools) for 21 days, starting on 21 March 2020. This declaration does not mention co-ordination between state and non-state actors; in relation to the quarantine measures taken, it mentions that "*The Ministry of Justice*" will be taking the lead in enacting measures. The Ministry of Health Declaration only makes mention of Montserrado and Margibi; it is unclear whether such measures apply throughout Liberia.

Additionally, in a [nationwide address](#) by President Weah he indicated that the Liberian government will be "*relying on the cooperation and support of our international partners.*" Organizations such as the Red Cross may fall into the category of "international partners", however, this is uncertain and this reference may mean simply other governments. [Reports](#) have mentioned that the Chinese government is donating medical supplies, including gloves and protective clothing, to Liberia. [Other reports](#) mention a US\$ 15 million donation made by the World Bank to the Liberian government to be allocated towards efforts to combat COVID-19. Moreover, the Liberian Ministry of Health recently issued a [press release](#), stating that the German governmental development corporation—German Cooperation Deutsche Zusammenarbeit—has donated three ambulances to the Liberian government.

There is, however, evidence to suggest some coordination between state and non-state actors. For example, in a conversation between Elaf Al-Wohaibi and Oniel Bestman (on a no-names basis), the Communications Manager of the Liberian National Red Cross Society (the "**LNRC**"), Mr. Bestman indicated that there are open lines of communication between the LNRC and the Liberian government. The LNRC has been invited to attend numerous governmental meetings in relation to the COVID-19 crisis. Based on a [report issued by IFRC](#) on 13 March 2020, the LNRC is part of the multi-stakeholder coordination committee coordinated by the National Public Health Institute of Liberia.

2. Is there mention of the role of Red Cross (RC) or humanitarian actors? In what areas/sectors? What responsibilities are ascribed to RC?



There is no mention of the LNRC, the RC or humanitarian actors in either the Ministry of Health Declaration or President Weah's nationwide address mentioned above. However, based on the aforementioned conversation with Mr. Bestman, we understand that the Liberian government and the LNRC have been cooperating with each other to curtail the crisis. The LNRC has for example worked directly with the Ministry of Health to provide logistical support and complement their humanitarian efforts. The Liberian government has also allowed the LNRC to be present at quarantine centers and provide on-site assistance.

Additionally, we note that [report issued by UNICEF](#) in 2010 discusses the implementation and impact of the Water Access, Sanitation and Hygiene promotion (WASH) Package Approach in Liberia. The program set out to combine a set of activities, including Household Water Treatment and Storage (HWTS), Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), and Hand Washing with soap (HWWS) in both community and schools. Based on the [aforementioned IFRC report](#), the LNRC has integrated COVID-19 messaging into the existing WASH programs currently in place at schools and the wider community.

3. Are there exceptions to travel restrictions that will facilitate the movement of RC/humanitarian relief teams and/or aid across borders? What (if any) quarantine requirements or other conditions are attached?

Liberia has suspended all commercial flights as of [23 March 2020](#). There is also a ban on travel into and out of Montserrado and Margibi, as well as a restriction on how taxis and public transport vehicles can be used safely in these regions, as per the Ministry of Health Declaration. While there do not appear to be specific exceptions for the movement of Red Cross teams, the Ministry of Health Decree states that the following are exempt from suspension:

- cargo flights;
- chartered flights; and
- 'special' flights.

In the conversation with Mr. Bestman, he suggested that humanitarian relief teams may fall within the exceptions.

It should be noted, however, that the Liberian Ministry of Health [travel advisory notice](#) (which predates the Ministry of Health Decree) includes certain travel restrictions, including for example, measures to limit the entry of people into Liberia from countries who had exceeded certain thresholds for numbers of COVID-19 cases.

These restrictions are different for individuals who are guests or employees of International Non-Governmental Organisations ("INGOs"). Guests or employees of INGOs who come from countries who are above the threshold limit in the travel advisory notice may enter Liberia if they are vetted by the National Public Health Institute of Liberia and/or the Ministry of Health.

A system of Precautionary Observation Centers ("POCs") exists to monitor individuals entering Liberia – this applies to employees for INGOs as well as accredited diplomats.



4. Are there exceptions to quarantines, curfews and other restrictions on movement that allow RC/humanitarian organizations access to vulnerable populations (including for psychosocial or non-medical aid)?

The Ministry of Health Declaration mentions, as referred to above, that all travel into and out of Montserrado and Margibi is prohibited. Mr. Bestman indicated in the conversation with him, however, that these restrictions do not currently apply to the Red Cross.

The Ministry of Health Declaration, at paragraph 8, places certain restrictions on the use of public transport within Montserrado and Margibi. Mr. Bestman did not mention in the conversation with him that there was an exemption from this rule for Red Cross volunteers.

5. Have any special legal facilities or exemptions been put in place for the importation of medical aid or other relief items or personnel (International Disaster Response Law)? What (if any) quarantine requirements or other conditions are attached?

Based on [an article](#) published on 27 March 2020, the Minister of Health has given certain organizations permission to travel to Liberia and deliver medical equipment.

According to Mr. Bestman in the conversation with him, the importation of medical aid and other relief items would fall under the exceptions highlighted in the response to question three above. Additionally, medical personnel would be allowed to enter, and the quarantine requirement would be assessed on a case-by-case basis based on the conditions in the country of origin. He indicated that physicians may be treated differently given the severity of the situation.

6. Is the RC (or humanitarian organizations) categorized as 'essential' or 'emergency' services, for the purposes of exemptions to restrictions on business operations and opening hours?

While it does not appear that the Red Cross has officially been categorized as “essential” or an “emergency service”. Mr. Bestman confirmed in the conversation with him that no particular restrictions have been placed on the LNRC or the RC at this time.

7. What other measures are provided in the emergency decrees? (for governmental actors, for communities, for health workers, etc.)

The Ministry of Health Declaration has indicated that in Montserrado and Margibi counties, there will be a complete closure of schools, public entertainment venues, barber shops, beaches, and places of worship, with heavy restrictions on attendances at sports fixtures, restaurants, and banks.

We have been unable to ascertain whether Liberia has undertaken any such measures in other counties.

8. Have restrictions been adopted or put in place that ban the export of protective medical equipment?



It is unclear whether there is a ban in place on the export of protective medical equipment based on the information available to us online. The relevant authority appears to be the [Liberian Medicines & Health Products Regulatory Authority](#) (“**LMHRA**”). We have attempted to contact them but have to date received no response. It is unclear whether the LMHRA is an active authority.