

*DATI Peace Advocates Visit Accused Maryland Rioters at National Palace of Corrections in Zwedru*



*The Zwedru National Palace of Corrections*

Jesus said to the multitude: "Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the children of God." He also instructs those who believe in him to "go and set the captives free and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord... to visit the downtrodden and shut-in..."

The DATI Maryland Chapter Peace Advocates received this mandate from their Executive Director, Rabbi Prince Joseph Tomoonh-Garlodeyh Gbaba, Sr., when it was reported thirty-four youths, including Maryland youth leader, Thomas Kuma, were accused, arrested, and imprisoned without due process. The incident occurred following the gruesome murder of Mordecial Nyemah in Pleebo, Maryland County, in Southeastern Liberia.

Mordecial was twelfth-grade student at Pleebo High School. He was also the bread winner for his family. Therefore, his brutal death was a big blow to the Nyemah family. Mordecial was buried last Saturday. His solemn homegoing was attended by thousands of aggrieved mourners. May his soul rest in peace.

Rabbi Gbaba condemned the wanton destruction of public and private properties by rioters in Maryland County when he spoke on "Focus on Liberia" podcast show last Thursday. Instead, he suggests in the future aggrieved citizens must pursue justice through rule of law but not via jungle justice. Gbaba also regrets Liberian students and youths are being held in detention beyond the constitutional time frame without legal representation or due process. Apart, Gbaba

has concerns about why the focus has switched from the perpetrators of the murder to those who aggrieved the murder of their colleague and son.



*Members of DATI Peace delegation to National Palace of Corrections in Zwedru*

In pursuit of justice for the Maryland youths, DATI administration dispatched a team of four Peace Advocates on Friday, May 14, 2021, to visit accused Maryland rioters that were subsequently transferred to the National Palace of Corrections in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County, after the Harper prison was burned down by angry rioters due to the ritualistic murder of a senior high school student in Pleebo. The DATI peace delegation included Maryland Chapter Director Meshach Sieh Elliott, Jasper Sheriff Biohtweh Tweh, Jeremiah Clayea, and George Gear, Jr.

The team arrived in Zwedru by 3pm on Friday, May 14th. They paid a visit to the Zwedru Palace of Corrections to see the prisoners on Saturday morning at 10:30 AM. The DATI delegation reported that the prison administrators were very courteous. They granted them the opportunity to meet in person all thirty-four prisoners who were accused and are awaiting trial. The prison staff advised them to observe all security protocols while within the prison facility. No photo taking was allowed but the peace delegates were given the opportunity to chat with individual prisoners and to take note of their personal and collective requests and concerns. Later, DATI delegation presented some toiletries, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and basic items for the prisoners as a small way of letting them know DATI cares for their well-being and will be in their corner during their period of trial and tribulation.

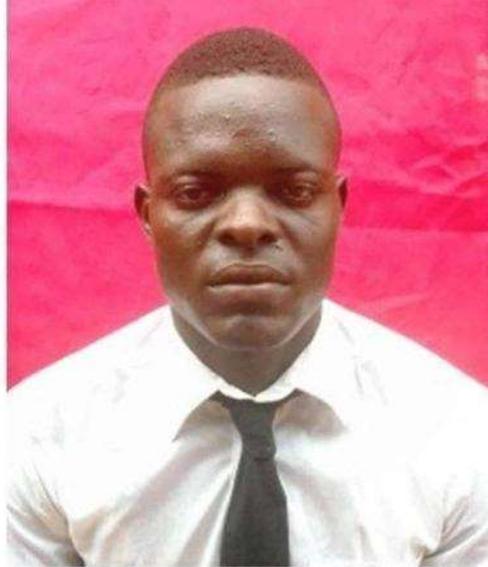


*Two members of DATI delegation: Meshach S. Elliott, DATI Gbenlue Chapter Director and Jasper Sheriff Biohtweh Tweh, DATI Farm Manager.*

Meshach S. Elliot delivered a special message of hope from the Executive Director, members of DATI's Board of Directors and the entire DATI family. Jasper Sheriff Biortweh Tweh also buttressed the mission statement delivered by the head of delegation. He urged his colleagues to be courageous and assured the prisoners of DATI's continued support.

Dr. Gbaba spoke to prison inmates via facetime from the United States. He reiterated his concern regarding the youths being imprisoned without bail or trial for a protracted length of time. In this light, Rabbi Gbaba also recommended that since most of the accused youths do not have criminal records, the government should grant them clemency and instruct the youths to do community service in return for their release so they can get back in school.

Thomas Kuma, Maryland youth leader, and several other youths are graduating seniors at Tubman University and various high schools in the region. For instance, Kuma was working on his thesis when he was accused, arrested, and imprisoned without due process. DATI's stance on the rioters' situation is that the youths are being detained based on unproven allegations. Therefore, government must grant the accused the opportunity to be bailed out until a court date is set for each of them to face the law. The thirty-four youths were charged with aggravated assault, arson, armed robbery, and criminal conspiracy.



PLEEBO HIGH SCHOOL MISSED YOU

**Mordecial Nyemah**

May Your Soul Rest In Perfect Peace

Thomas Kuma spoke on behalf of his colleagues. He revealed their overall well-being is at stake and that some of the accused are encountering medical problems that need immediate medical attention. Consequently, Kuma is appealing for timely legal and financial assistance from sympathizers to secure their immediate release. He advanced the following points:

1. That they are fed one time daily;
2. That when they were being transported to Zwedru, some ERU officers peed on them;
3. That the Director of the prison and his officers are nice to them;
4. That speedy investigation be conducted in order to set the accused rioters free; and,
5. The youths are requesting the assistance of the Liberia Bar Association for legal representation because they cannot afford to hire lawyers to represent them in court.

The DATI Peace delegation returned to Harper on Saturday, May 15, 2021, at 11:55PM. Dehkontee Artists Theatre is appealing to the government of Liberia to respect the constitutional rights of the thirty-four youths accused of committing various crimes ranging from aggravated assault, arson, criminal conspiracy, and armed robbery. All human rights organization in Liberia and around the world are also asked to please pay keen attention to this case as it progresses.

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