



Q10608. Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 13 August 2009

Re: Ritual killings linked to tribal traditions

Section 2c of the *US Department of State 2008 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Liberia*, under the heading 'Freedom of Religion', states:

"There were reports of ritual killings – the killing for body parts for use in traditional rituals – throughout the country. On July 16, a boy was found dead in Harper with missing body parts; on July 23, Patricia Patrick was found dead with body parts missing, and on October 1, Vanie Boima was found dead with body parts missing in Margibi County. The government treated such killings as homicides and investigated them accordingly, although there were no prosecutions during the year. There were multiple reports of protests against ritual killings, which at times led to riots and loss of life." (US Department of State (25 February 2009) - *2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Liberia*)

Paragraph 36 of Section 3c of a February 2009 *UN Security Council* report under the heading 'Promotion of human rights', states:

"Harmful traditional practices, including trials by ordeal, ritual killings and female genital mutilation, continue to be widely practiced, in some cases with the knowledge or encouragement of local authorities. The conviction of 14 persons for a murder committed in the course of a trial by ordeal in November 2007 was a positive development. However, the presidential clemency granted to them in September 2008, following an appeal made by the victim, perpetrators, County Legislators, local leaders and communities, illustrates how deeply entrenched such practices are. Furthermore, owing to limited access to education, health and social welfare services, a large percentage of the population remain unable to realize their economic and social rights." (UN Security Council (10 February 2009) - *Eighteenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia*, p.8-9)

Paragraph 1d of section I of a December 2008 *UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)* report under the heading 'Executive summary', states:

"Harmful traditional practices including trials by ordeal, ritual killings and female genital mutilation (FGM) continue to be practiced almost with impunity." (UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) (03 December 2008) – *Report on the Human Rights situation in Liberia, November 2007 – June 2008*, p.1)

Page 23 of a July 2007 *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre* publication, under the heading 'Despite progress towards peace, many challenges remain (2005)', reports:

"In Pleebo and Harper, Maryland County, there were alarming incidents of mob violence from 16 to 23 January, resulting from allegations that the disappearance of certain individuals was due to ritual killings. In Harper, these incidents resulted in the destruction of police and United Nations property, as well as injury to members of the local population. The National Transitional Government of Liberia responded by instituting a dusk-to-dawn curfew and UNMIL troops and formed police units acted quickly to restore calm. The curfew was eventually lifted on 7 February." (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (27 July 2007) - *Liberia: Focus for IDP Returnees Moves from Conflict to Development*, p.23)

A June 2005 *BBC News* report adds:

"Elections for the first president since Charles Taylor left the country are due in October, which, our correspondent says, is the likely reason for the increased number of ritual killings.

Human parts such as genital organs are believed to offer supernatural powers, especially by aspiring politicians and so the number of alleged ritual killing rises in the run-up to elections.

According to local media reports the latest such killing, which occurred in the northern Bong County, involved a female who was beheaded and had her genital organs removed.

"If you killed because you want to make a sacrifice to be president or senator, you fool yourself," Mr Bryant said. "Stop ritualistic killings, it will not pay you anything, it will not make you rich, it will not give you jobs."

In January extra United Nations peacekeepers had to be sent to south-eastern Liberia following violent protests over alleged ritual killings." (BBC News (29 June 2005) – *Liberia ritual killings warning*)

A January 2005 *BBC News* report states:

"Extra United Nations peacekeepers have been sent to south-eastern Liberia following violent protests over alleged ritual killings, the UN says.

The extra troops will enforce an overnight curfew in Maryland county.

Over the weekend, a police station was attacked by people who said that the police had released suspected killers.

The authorities would not confirm any ritual killings but the area is notorious for using human genital organs to make magic charms." (BBC News (25 January 2005) – *Liberian 'ritual killings' alert*)

References:

BBC News (29 June 2005) – *Liberia ritual killings warning*

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4633827.stm>

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BBC News (25 January 2005) – *Liberian 'ritual killings' alert*

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www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/46a9e0f72.html

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UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) (03 December 2008) – *Report on the Human Rights situation in Liberia, November 2007 – June 2008*

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US Department of State (25 February 2009) - *2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Liberia*

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(Accessed 13 August 2009)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted:

Amnesty International
BBC News
ECOI: European Country of Origin Information Network
Freedom House
Human Rights Watch
International Crisis Group (ICG)
International Displacement Monitoring Centre
IRB: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
IRIN News
Lexis Nexis
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
UK Home Office
UNHCR Refworld
UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)
UN Security Council
US Department of State