

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
Sent: Saturday, October 8, 2011 9:03 AM
To: H
Subject: Sirleaf

If you want to do over weekend, call sheet is below. Oscar should have printed as well.

The Secretary's Call Sheet for Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Purpose of Call: To congratulate President Sirleaf (and Liberian activist Leymah Gbowee) on sharing this year's Nobel Peace Prize.

Nobel Prize: Congratulations to you and to Leymah Gbowee [LAY-mah BOW-ee] on this prestigious honor. I am deeply impressed by your efforts to promote peace and reconciliation in Liberia and advance economic opportunity, including the contribution of women entrepreneurs. I am pleased the Committee recognized the powerful role women are playing in building peace and ending conflict around the world. Your achievement is an inspiration to all those dedicated to furthering the causes of peace and women's rights.

Elections: We look forward to Liberia holding peaceful, free, and fair elections October 11. Whatever the outcome, we will work with Liberia's government and people to ensure continued progress and lasting regional peace.

Background: The Nobel committee announced October 7 that this year's Nobel Peace Prize will be shared among three women: Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Liberian activist Leymah Gbowee, and activist Tawakkul Karman of Yemen. The women will share the estimated \$1.4 million cash prize "for their nonviolent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work."

Most Liberians welcomed the Nobel announcement. The decision likely will not affect the voting trend of opposition party grassroots supporters, who may see it as the international community indirectly campaigning for Sirleaf's re-election. Most observers predict she will win a plurality on October 11, and then win round two, to be held November 8. As expected, in an October 5 ruling Liberia's Supreme Court interpreted a vague, constitutional ten-year residency requirement such that all 16 presidential candidates (including her) are eligible to run.

A social worker and mother of six, Gbowee organized a peace movement that helped end Liberia's second civil war in 2003, leading to the election of Johnson-Sirleaf as Africa's first female president in 2005. Gbowee is the central character in the 2008 documentary, *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, showing how Liberian women of all religions joined together to push for an end to the civil war. USAID and others have highlighted the film in post-conflict zones, mobilizing African women to petition for peace and security.