

CARGE DELIVERED BY HIS HONOR ROOSEVELT Z. WILLIE AT THE OPENING OF THE
AUGUST AD 2018 TERM OF COURTS A.B.C.D & E AT THE TEMPLE OF JUSTICE BUILDING
MONROVIA,LIBERIA MONDAY AUGUST 13 2018

THE CHIEF JUSTICE AND ASSOCIATE JUSTICES

MY FELLOW COLLEAGUE JUDGES AND MAGISTRATES

THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND OTHER OFFICIALS OF THE MINISTRY

OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF THE NATJL

THE PRESIDENT, OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF THE LNBA

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC DEFENDERS

THE PRESIDENT, OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF PUBLIC DEFENDERS

MEMBERS OF THE FOURTH ESTATE, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

On November 17, 1999, the International Association of Judges (IAJ), which also has an observer status at the United Nations adopted the Universal Charter of the Judge in Taiwan but, in view of the many challenges facing Judges around the world, particularly member states of the Association made some amendments to the Charter and re-adopted it at its 60th International Conference in Santiago, Chile, on 14th November 2017. At that Conference in Chile, the IAJ called upon all of its members to disseminate the information contained in the Charter to their various governments and other stakeholders for implementation and consciousness in order to ensure an effective, independent and a corruption-free Judiciary.

It is against this backdrop that my Charge today for this August A.D. 2018 Term of Court, although brief but very essential and is based on Article 8.3 of the Universal Charter of the Judge, titled, 'Retirement', which states in part that, the Judge has a right to retirement with an annuity or pension or allowance in accordance with his/her professional category. Despite this provision, it is saddened to note that for the past almost ten years, we as Judges have been doing everything both legally and humanly possible for the National Legislature and the Executive to see reason to enact the appropriate laws for retirement benefits befitting us as professionals and compared to our colleagues within the sub-region, where it is reported that Judges and Magistrates retire with their salaries and benefits such as vehicles, gasoline, allowance, etc. Moreover, these retired Judges and Magistrates get increment in their salaries and benefits whenever those of their colleagues still in active duty receive similar increment. Notwithstanding our efforts and the example in the sub-region as herein stated above, our plights

in retirement and pains over the years continue to fall on deaf ears and have yielded no fruitful results; thereby retiring us in abject poverty and disgrace. It is saddened to note that the retirement benefits of Judges and Magistrates are L\$7,500 and L\$4,000 per month, respectively; which is 50% of our salaries. The monthly allowances of US\$5,000 for Judges and US\$2,000 for Magistrates, 135 or 40 gallons of monthly fuel for Judges or Magistrates, quarterly GSM units and some funds for entertainment are all cut-off in retirement, to include vehicles given to Judges. It is very disheartening and frustrating for professionals like us to serve our country for all of our life time and reach retirement age of seventy years and live in abject poverty and disgrace for the rest of our life, because the monthly salaries (L\$7,500 and L\$4,000) earn in retirement cannot even put food on the table for us and our families not to mention medical bills. This inhumane condition has led to the untimely death of many of our colleagues. As I am reading this charge, many of our colleagues, who have retired and those just retired benefits to include the vehicles they rode during active service have all been taken away from them and they are standing by the road-side to take commercial vehicles to carry them to their destinations. As one of them recently told me in my capacity as the President of the NATJL, he was humiliated to the point that while riding in a commercial vehicle, he was virtually insulted by one of the passengers who might have appeared before him during his service as a Judge by making all kinds of derogatory remarks against him.

Therefore, the only hope for our retired members now is our Association, meaning, the National Association of Trial Judges of Liberia (NATJL), which is catering to their welfare and wellbeing because, the Country they worked and labored for during their youthful years has to the greater extent neglected them.

We want to state here for the record that one of colleagues Judge William Ware, retired few years ago and for each time he took his monthly salary of L\$7,500, it could not feed him and his family. Therefore, the whole while he was sick until he died, it was the NATJL that underwrote most of his medical bills. Another colleague of ours, Judge Friday Nah formerly of the Debt Court of Sinoe County is retired and now suffering from stroke. It is the NATJL that is catering to him because his retirement salary cannot even feed him and his family. Additionally, Judge Emery Paye who just retired two weeks ago vehicle has been taken away from him and Judge Ami Musu Jones also retired recently is sick and shut-in.

We therefore call upon the 54th National Legislature and the Executive to see reason to consider enacting the appropriate laws in accordance with international best practice for Judges and Magistrates retirement benefits, consistent also with our professional category, as this is will also be in conformity with the Universal Chatter of the Judge as promulgated and adopted at the 60th meeting of the IAJ.

The enactment of such law is most urgent and demanding at this time because, we are witnesses to a Petition recently filed before the Honorable Supreme Court of Liberia by the former Associate Justice of the Court Her Gladys K. Johnson, concerning the payment of her benefits in

retirement. It is reported that the Government of Liberia has conceded to the Petition. We therefore humbly appeal to the Honorable Supreme Court of Liberia to bring down the opinion in this matter, which will serve as a precedent also for Judges and Magistrates.

Mr. Chief Justice and Associate Justices, fellow colleagues, members of the Bar and the general public, for the past two years, while we attended the IAJ National Conference as observer before being admitted on November 13, 2017, we observed and saw member States of the Association report on activities concerning their various local Associations and as well their Government's interest in Judges and Magistrates, with respect to the independence of the Judiciary and the welfare and wellbeing of Judges and Magistrates. This year being the 61st National Conference to be held in Marrakech, Morocco, from 8th to 13th October 2018, it is our hope and prayer that as we attend this Conference, we will also be able to report to our international parent body law enacted or opinion handed down from the Honorable Supreme Court gears towards retirement benefits for Judges and Magistrates, so that they can live in dignity for the rest of their life during retirement.

Mr. Chief Justice and Associate Justices, fellow colleagues, members of the Bar and the general public, this is my charge for the official opening of the August A.D. 2018 Term of Court, and I now declare this Term of Court opened.

THANK YOU!!