

IN THE HONORABLE SUPREME COURT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
SITTING IN ITS OCTOBER TERM, A.D. 2025.

BEFORE HIS HONOR : YAMIE QUIQUI GBEISAY SR.....CHIEF JUSTICE
BEFORE HER HONOR : JAMESETTA H. WOLOKOLIE.....ASSOCIATE JUSTICE
BEFORE HIS HONOR : YUSSIF D. KABA.....ASSOCIATE JUSTICE
BEFORE HER HONOR : CEATNEH D. CLINTON JOHNSON.....ASSOCIATE JUSTICE
BEFORE HIS HONOR : BOAKAI N. KANNEH.....ASSOCIATE JUSTICE

IN RE: CONTEMPT PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MR. JUSTIN OLDPA YEAEZHN

Heard: February 12, 2026

Decided: February 13, 2026

MADAM JUSTICE WOLOKOLIE DELIVERED THE OPINION OF THE COURT

On February 2, 2026, Mr. Justin Oldpa Yeazen, the contemnor herein made and published a podcast on his social media platform wherein he accused the Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of acts of corruption and the Contemnor went further to levy derogative vulgarities and profanities against the Chief Justice and the Judiciary as a whole, and perplexingly against the Chief Justice's mother.

On February 4, 2026, the Honorable Supreme Court invited the contemnor to appear before the full bench on Tuesday February 10, 2026 to show cause why he should not be held in Contempt of the Supreme Court for levying derogative insults, vulgarities, and profanities against the Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court, and further against the mother of the Chief Justice. In so doing, the Supreme Court of Liberia appointed two amici curiae in persons of Counsellors M. Wilkins Wright and Richard J. Scott, Jr. to aid the court in the determination of this suit.

The contemnor appeared but without a legal counsel and told the Court that he had no legal counsel and further requested the Court to provide him with a counsel. Based on the advice of the amici curiae, the court referred the contemnor to the Public Defense Office, ordering that the contemnor be represented by two of the defense counsels to include the President of the counsel's association and the Coordinator of the Public Defense Program. The hearing was discontinued until Thursday, February 13, 2026.

The Amici Curiae appeared and filed an amended brief in which they presented the following issues:

1. Whether or not a person who engages in the use of invectives, vulgar language, naked abuse of womanhood and indecent verbiage can justifiably claim or rely on the Constitutional protection of freedom of speech or freedom of expression?
2. Whether or not the Podcast commentary by Mr. Justin Oldpa Yeazehn constitutes contempt of court where he falsely accused the Chief Justice and other members

of the Court for being corrupt and where this broadcast was carried live on Facebook?

Counsellor M. Wilkins Wright, speaking on behalf of the *amici curiae*, passionately spoke on the first issue stating that Article 15 of the Liberian Constitution (1986) provides that every person is entitled to freedom of expression, freedom of speech, freedom of opinion and freedom of thought except that such person is held responsible for an abuse thereof; that one who engages in the use of invectives, vulgar languages, abuse of womanhood and indecent verbiage cannot rely on the constitutional protection of freedom of speech, as such expletives go the clear abuse of that right under the Constitution for which under the very Constitution that person can be held responsible therefor; that as Liberians we are all free to discuss and express our views and opinions on issues trending in the society but we should be mindful that our expressions are not unlimited.

The *amici curiae* referred to other restrictions regarding fundamental freedom. They referred to Article 14 of the Constitution that states that: “All persons shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment thereof *except as may be required by law to protect public safety, order, health or moral or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.*” (emphasis ours). Freedom under this Article of the Constitution, the *amici curiae* stated, is not absolute and it can be limited by judicial action in proceedings grounded in defamation or invasion of the rights of privacy and publicity or in the commercial aspect of expression in deception, false advertisement, and copyright infringement.

Referring to the expressions used by the contemnor in his podcast abusing the Chief Justice and going further to use some degrading expressions as regards the Chief Justice mother’s private parts, the *amici curiae* said that on their face they are defamatory, vulgar, and indecent, and therefore would be actionable. The *amici curiae* concluded that the contemnor violated the rights of His Honor the Chief Justice and the mother of the Chief Justice and has abused and cast aspersion on Liberian womanhood, and for which the Honorable Supreme Court of Liberia should adjudge the contemnor guilty of violating his freedom of expression as guaranteed by the Constitution and for which he must be sanctioned and punished accordingly since these egregious vulgarities are clearly an abuse of freedom of speech which are protected constitutional perimeters of Article 14 and Article 15, and the contemnor demeaning and insulting words against the Chief Justice and his mother can only be seen as one intended to reduce the Supreme Court to public ridicule, while at the same time undermining the dignity of the Supreme Court of Liberia.

The *amici curiae* further expounded that the same Constitution in granting freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of thought, etc. also provides for the protection of

and preservation of **POSITIVE** Liberian tradition, culture, and values. (Lib. Constitution Article 5.b); that vulgar, abusive, uncivilized and unacceptable language cannot be said to protect positive Liberian culture and reserve Liberian values, and to abuse “**woman cuss**” is very Un-Liberian and does not represent our true Liberia culture and values, as it is no tradition or culture that a true Liberia would want to pass down to his children or the next generation. The *amici curiae* say that they emphatically condemn, denounce, and despise the behavior, the conduct, the action and the verbiage of the contemnor and say that it ought not to be repeated, and advise that such behavior be strongly condemned and severely punished to serve as deterrence to others who have such inclination.

The *amici curiae* say that the right of the government to ensure that freedom of speech, freedom of thought, freedom of conscience and freedom of religion are to be exercised in an orderly manner is constitutionally guaranteed under Article 5(d) which states:

“The Republic shall preserve, protect and promote positive Liberian cultures, ensuring that traditional values which are compatible with public policy and national progress are adopted and developed as an integral part of the growing needs of the Liberian society.”

The egregious verbal insults rendered on the Supreme Court Chief Justice and his mother cannot be characterized as a language that should be promoted, preserved and protected as a positive Liberian culture, therefore the contemnor should be accordingly punished for the abuse thereof.

Referring to their second question raised, that is, whether or not the Podcast commentary by Mr. Justine Oldpa Yeazehn where he falsely accused the Chief Justice and other members of the Court of being corrupt and where this broadcast was carried live on Facebook constitutes contempt of court, the Amici Curiae answered this question in the affirmative, stating that the contemnor should be adjudged guilty of criminal contempt, the punishment for which will rest in the sound judicious discretion of the Court. Speaking on contempt, the Supreme Court in a unanimous Opinion delivered by his Honor Mr. Justice S. Raymond Horace, Sr., declared as follows:

“The Supreme Court has the inherent power not only to punish for contempt of Court, but to determine what constitutes contempt,” also, any act which tends to belittle, degrade, obstruct, interrupt, or prevent the Court’s administration of justice is contemptuous.” IN RE: Francis G. Doe, Sr., 23 LLR 38, 42 (1974).

The contemnor, Mr. Yeazehn, appeared as ordered, represented by Counsellor Joseph B. Debblay, Coordinator of the Public Defense Program of Liberia and Counsellor Bestman D. Juah, Sr., President of the National Association of Public Defenders of Liberia (NAPDOL). Counsels for the contemnor filed a contemnor’s brief raising a single issue:

Whether or not under the facts and circumstances the podcasts published by Mr. Justin Oldpa Yeazehn constitute contempt of court?

The contemnor's counsellors as per their brief, stated that the purpose of a criminal contempt is to vindicate the dignity of the court against all acts that bring the court into disrespect or undermine its authority and that the punishment therefor should lie in the sound discretion of the Honorable Court. Admitting that the vulgarity and other invectives spewed upon the Chief Justice, Associate Justices, the judges of subordinate courts and the Judiciary as a whole, was contemptuous, the counsellors, however stated that in a conference with the contemnor, he expressed regrets and expressed remorse for his unwholesome act and actions against the Chief Justice, Associate Justices, judges of the subordinate courts and the judiciary as a whole, prayed that the Court tenders justice with mercy and further stated that he will file a behavioral bond with the Court, committing not to conduct himself in any manner or form that harms the reputation of the Judiciary now and in the future.

Having heard from the *amici curiae* and counsellors representing the contemnor the Court thanks the *amici curiae* for their work and their support to the Court in such short notice, and the defense counsels for meeting up with their obligation.

As espoused in several of its Opinions, the Court has consistently held that it will decide which issues are determinative of a given case and that it need not discuss every issue presented by the parties.

This Court therefore considers that lone issue is whether the contemnor's derogative insults, vulgarities, and profanities against the Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court, as well as, against the decency of a woman falls within the Constitutional perimeter of "Free-Speech."

Freedom of speech is a fundamental right that is constitutionally protected by Article 15 of the Liberian Constitution (1986), and it allows all persons the right to express their views, opinions, or ideas. It reads:

"a) Every person shall have the right to freedom of expression, being fully responsible for the abuse thereof. This right shall not be curtailed, restricted or enjoined by government save during an emergency declared in accordance with this Constitution.

b) The right encompasses the right to hold opinions without interference and the right to knowledge. It includes freedom of speech and of the press, academic freedom to receive and impart knowledge and information and the right of libraries to make such knowledge available. It includes non-interference with the use of the mail, telephone and telegraph. It likewise includes the right to remain silent.

c) In pursuance of this right, there shall be no limitation on the public right to be informed about the government and its functionaries.

d) Access to state owned media shall not be denied because of any disagreement with or dislike of the ideas express. Denial of such access may be challenged in a court of competent jurisdiction.

e) This freedom may be limited only by judicial action in proceedings grounded in defamation or invasion of the rights of privacy and publicity or in the commercial aspect of expression in deception, false advertising and copyright infringement.”(Emphasis ours).

The constitutional right to speak freely is synonymous and analogous to the rights of freedom of thought, conscience, opinions, and religion as articulated in Article 14 of the Constitution as espoused above. This provision of the Constitution reads:

“All persons shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment thereof except as may be required by law to protect public safety, order, health or morals or in the fundamental rights and freedoms of others...”

The caveat espoused in Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution of Liberia (1986) seeks to mold the elements of rights, law and order, and prevents us from succumbing to being a beastly state, and to elevate us to human decency. Morality and ethics remain aspirations for the exercise and enjoyment of rights, and emphasis on morality and ethics are guiding principles which must help keep order in the society. Profanity and vulgarity are barriers to be set as against the true intent of Article 15 of the Constitution, especially if our nation must be placed amongst the comity of nations.

The contemnor in his answer to questions posed by the Bench stated that individuals come to him and report their dissatisfaction with issues and he as the influencer speaks on their behalf. Obscenity and invectives toward individuals, womanhood is clearly against public order. The law seeks to ensure order. Should the Court and those who have been entrusted by the law to man our courts, be hesitant to act when the institution comes under attack?

As stated, a careful review of these Constitutional provisions regarding the right to free speech or freedom of thought, conscience or religion is not absolute; rather, the same Constitution that guarantees freedom of expression also places a caveat or condition on the speaker to be fully responsible for his abuse in exercising such rights.

This constitutional caveat or protections ensure that freedom of speech, freedom of thought, freedom of conscience and freedom of religion are not to be exercised in an abusive manner as they are intended to preserve public safety, sanctity and order. As the amici curiae emphasized, the right of the Government to ensure that freedom of speech, freedom

of thought, freedom of conscience and freedom of religion are exercised in an orderly manner is constitutionally guaranteed in Article 5(b) which states:

“the Republic shall preserve, protect and promote positive Liberian culture, ensuring that traditional values which are compatible with public policy and national progress are adopted and developed as an integral part of the growing needs of the Liberian society.”

Given the expressed language of Article 5(b), it can emphatically be stated that the egregious verbal insults spewed out against the Supreme Court Chief Justice and his mother cannot be characterized as a language that should be promoted, preserved, and protected as a positive Liberian culture; neither can this Court or any reasonable person accept such egregious vulgarity as something compatible with public policy and national progress that should be adopted and developed as an integral part of the growing needs of our Liberian society.

Therefore, since the Supreme Court is an integral Arm of the Republic with a legal duty to protect and defend not just its image but also uphold Article 5(b) of the Constitution by ensuring that all free speech and actions must be designed to preserve, protect and promote positive Liberian culture, and traditional values which are compatible with public policy and national progress, the Supreme Court in this light must exercise its constitutional power of contempt and send a very strong message through these contempt proceedings that will serve as deterrence to the contemnor and would be abuser of free speech. The contemnor though having apologized during his appearance before us, this Court says that it is not convinced that his apology was well intended as he stood and spoke for more than 15 minutes, and it was only when his attention was bought by a member of the bench to his counsels' statement that the contemnor regretted his action and promised to desist from further vulgarity and profanity against individuals, particularly womanhood.

Accordingly, this Court, pursuant to its inherent power to not only punish for contempt but to also determine what constitute contempt, hereby adjudges the contemnor guilty of contempt of the Honorable Supreme Court of Liberia and declares that his conduct in spewing out invective, insults, abuses and indecent language constitutes a violation of the Constitutional right to freedom of expression.

WHEREFORE AND IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, the Court, having found the contemnor guilty of criminal contempt and the Court, hereby imposes a definite and certain imprisonment term of six months or one hundred and eighty (180) calendar days to be served at the Monrovia Central Prison. The contemnor, prior to the end of the six (6) months, shall publish in a local daily for five days a letter of apology to the Women of Liberia and shall also file a behavioral bond with the Clerk of the Supreme Court of Liberia

to guarantee a proper behavior. The term of imprisonment is to take immediate effect as of the date of rendition of this Opinion and handing down of this Judgment. AND IT IS HEREBY SO ORDERED.

he will never use invectives, vulgar languages, or profanity against any Liberian. The term of imprisonment is to take immediate effect as of the date of rendition of this Opinion and handing down of this Judgment. AND IT IS HEREBY SO ORDERED.