

Ellen's office hit with indefinite media blackout

The Executive Mansion Reporters Association (EMRA) has with immediate effect placed an indefinite blackout on the office of president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. The EMRA took the decision on Tuesday, 18 September 2012, at a news conference held on the ground floor of the Ministry Foreign Affairs in Monrovia.

The Ministry is currently hosting the offices of the Liberian presidency. Addressing the news conference, the acting president of EMRA, Robert Clarke, said the action by the association stemmed from what he referred to as the high level of marginalisation being meted out against them by the office of the president when it comes to foreign trips.

He disclosed that their action was primarily prompted by the "failure" of the president to grant them an audience in order to enable them put forth their concerns. He added that numerous efforts made by EMRA to meet with the Liberian leader through presidential Spokesman, Jerelimek Piah, proved futile.

Clarke pointed out: "For too long, Independent Executive Mansion Reporters had not been given the opportunity to travel out of the country with the Liberian leader." He said reporters assigned at the Executive Mansion are allowed to travel with president Johnson-Sirleaf on what he calls "dusty and muddy trips in Montserrado County and other parts of the country."

The acting president of EMRA termed as unacceptable "the handpicking of unassigned journalists at the Executive Mansion including publishers, managing editors, talk show hosts, amongst others".

The Sky FM Executive Mansion correspondent recalled that the publisher of the *FrontpageAfrica* newspaper, Rodney Sieh, traveled with the president at the last African Union (AU) Summit instead of the entity's assigned reporter, Madam Wade Williams.

He disclosed that the publisher of *The Analyst Newspaper* Stanley Seakor and the host of Truth Breakfast Show (TBS) Mamadee Dakateah are expected to travel with the president very soon, even though they are not Executive Mansion correspondents. But this could not be independently verified by the Heritage up to press time.

He maintained that EMRA is "disappointed over the manner and form in which journalists are selected to travel on foreign trips with the president." According to him, members of EMRA have not been respected for a long period of time, and as such, they (executive mansion reporters) 'will stay away from all activities involving the office of the president until their concerns are addressed.

The Liberian broadcast journalist alleged that Executive Mansion reporters are being treated as "orphans" of the office of the Liberian presidency. He pointed out that journalists are made to travel in an Executive Mansion vehicle to the rural parts of the country without a "single bag of mineral water."

"We have observed that journalists that are not assigned at the Executive Mansion have been selected over the years to travel with the president on foreign trips. We have gathered credible information that the current presenter of the TBS and the publisher of *The Analyst Newspaper* have been selected to travel with the president on a pending trip to the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in New York very soon. Our

disappointment is that journalists who are covering the presidency are not allowed on foreign trips," Clarke averred.

Clarke continued: "The presidential press secretary will pick up his telephone and call almost every one of us when it comes to domestic trip. While is it that when it comes to foreign trip, the President will go about selecting those they called big fish in the media."

He added: "Are we not competent to cover issues surrounding the presidency or Liberia's development? We feel that we are only regarded when it comes to domestic trips. Over the weekend, we drove in the du to the makeshift farm of the President. So, we are staying away from all activities surrounding the office of the President until we our concerns can be addressed."

Source: [allAfrica](#)

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