President Sirleaf Announces Death of Former Chief Justice Johnnie Lewis;
Expresses Condolence to the Official and Biological Families, Friends and the National Bar Association

(MONROVIA, LIBERIA – Thursday, January 22, 2015) President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has expressed heartfelt condolences to the official family – the Honorable Supreme Court of Liberia - and the Liberian National Bar Association; as well as the biological family and friends of His Honor Johnnie N. Lewis, former Chief Justice of the Honorable Supreme Court of Liberia.

The late Chief Justice Lewis died Wednesday evening, January 21, in Monrovia en route to the John F. Kennedy Medical Center. He was 69 years old.

According to an Executive Mansion release made the assertion when she officially announced the death of the former Chief Justice in a brief statement to the nation on Thursday, January 22, 2015.

“The Government of Liberia notes with profound regrets the passing of former Chief Justice of the Republic of Liberia, His Honor Johnnie N. Lewis, a long tenured public servant in this country and in the international community,” she said.

The Liberian leader indicated that the late Counselor served his country and the international community with extraordinary talent, intellect, knowledge and brilliance, and urged all to grant him the respect that he duly deserves.

Cllr. Lewis (69) was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Liberia in 2006 until his early retirement became effective on September 10, 2012. In his letter to me dated August 28, 2012, he had cited health reasons for stepping aside at 66 years old then. Prior to this position, he was appointed by President William R. Tolbert and served with credit and distinction as Resident Circuit Judge of the Third Judicial Circuit in Sinoe County, replacing his deceased father who also performed in that capacity as well as Ad hoc Chief Justice of the Supreme Court with dignity and respect.

As Head of the Third Branch of Government, Cllr. Lewis led a tradition of calm judgment, hard work and unwavering devotion to duty; thus immensely contributing to the development of the country.

Cllr. Lewis, the 18th Chief Justice of Liberia, hails from Sinoe County, where his great, great grand-father, J.N. Lewis was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and later served a Secretary of State from 1850 to 1854; his wife Susannah Lewis, was Chair of the ladies who designed the first flag of Liberia. James N. Lewis, the son of J.N. Lewis and Susannah Lewis, served as Superintendent of Sinoe County. John N. Lewis was a Member of the House of Representatives from Sinoe County and also served as Speaker of that Branch of Government.

He was born on April 16, 1946 unto the union of the late Judge Roderick N. Lewis, Sr. and Mary Elizabeth Houston Lewis, Educator, in Greenville, Sinoe County. He was educated at the St. Joseph’s Catholic Elementary School and later the Sinoe High School. He earned a Bachelors of Arts Degree at the University of Liberia and later a Bachelors of Laws Degree, cum laude, in 1969 from the University of Liberia. He was also editor of the Liberian Law Journal. Two years later, he earned a Masters of Laws Degree from the Yale Law School in New Haven, Connecticut, USA.

The late Chief Justice, upon his return home from studies, he served as Assistant Professor of Law at the Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law and subsequently became Dean of the Institution between 1984 and 1990.

On the international scene, particular with reference to the United Nations Operations in Somalia, he worked as Legal Officer in the Office of the Legal Counsel to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General as well as an Alternate Secretary of the UN Joint Appeals Board and Joint Disciplinary Committee at Headquarters in New York. His most recent appointment with the United Nations was his stint in Bosnia and Herzegovina as Senior Legal Adviser.

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