



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF CAPE PALMAS

P. O. Box 212, 6500 Harper, 10 Liberia

Mobile: +231-777-519-766/231-886-519-766

Email: bishopofcapepalmas@gmail.com

A STATEMENT OF CONCERN ON THE CHALLENGES, DIFFICULTIES, AND DANGERS OF TRAVELLING INTO AND OUT OF THE SOUTHEASTERN REGION OF LIBERIA.

By

Most Rev. Andrew Jagaye Karnley
Bishop of Cape Palmas

The Catholic Diocese of Cape Palmas, whose pastoral and administrative jurisdiction comprises the five counties of the southeast of Liberia, is overwhelmingly concerned about the poor and deplorable road conditions along the main corridors leading into and out of the region. These prevailing conditions are always posing serious challenges, difficulties, and dangers for the movement of people and goods. The safety of people is compromised and endangered in their taking risks to travel on deplorable roads and on vessels that are not sea worthy. The recent tragedy of the MV Niko Ivanka, bound from the Freeport of Monrovia to the ports of the southeast, illustrates this concern of safety. Painful memories of the loss of human lives and goods in sinking vessels at sea in the past still linger in the minds of people. The loss of lives and goods is irreparable; and the trauma of the survivors of this tragedy and others in the past may take a long time to go away or may never even go away.

The length of time people spend on these deplorable roads is unbearable; and the conditions under which they are subjected on the roads are dehumanizing. The damage to goods and the cost of the wear and tear on vehicles are incalculable. And the price of goods and services is constantly soaring to the disadvantage of ordinary people, and even for those who can afford.

The region is hardly attracting people and even its own sons and daughters for religious, social, and cultural activities because of the challenges, difficulties, and dangers in travelling on the roads. Organizations working in the region and ordinary people are finding it extremely expensive and challenging to carry on development work in any of the counties of the southeast of Liberia. Additionally, the institutions of the southeast do not attract and retain qualified and productive human resource because it is an uphill task to travel in and out of any county safely, timely, and cheaply.

The attractive white sand coastal beaches and the lush green forest sectors of the southeast hold a lot of potential for recreational and tourism purposes if the roads are improved and made easily accessible. The roads will make a positive difference in agricultural and economic activities in this part of Liberia, thus providing unlimited opportunities for gainful employment

I must commend the past government, with the support of the African Development Bank, for initiating the construction of the Harper Fishtown road in 2015 which is now nearing completion. The continuity of this project under the current government is also commendable. It is welcome

news that work has begun on the Ganta – Saclepea road through support from the Government of Liberia; and the assurance of support by the World Bank for the Saclepea – Toe Town road is also encouraging. However, it is of vital importance that other road corridors are properly maintained for the easy and safe movement of people and goods. The Buchanan - Greenville road and the corridor into Grand Kru County from Greenville deserve attention. I note with appreciation the ongoing road works in Grand Kru County by SSF.

The feeder road projects by the Swedish and Liberian governments in some rural communities of the southeast of Liberia are noteworthy contributions to the development of the road infrastructure of the region. It is the hope and prayer of the Catholic Diocese of Cape Palmas that every town and village will be made accessible.

The Government of Liberia needs to ensure, through the Ministry of Transport and other relevant agencies, that the movement of people and goods by sea and road is possible and safe by the best standards. Private citizens could invest in acquiring vessels to serve the coastal communities of Liberia.

Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) deserves recognition and commendation for providing safe air travel into and out of the communities of the southeast of Liberia since 2016. They deserve credit for their professionalism, strict observance of safety standards, and the regular maintenance of their aircrafts.

I therefore plead with the Government and all stakeholders of Liberia to prioritize and take concrete actions for the improvement and the regular maintenance of the roads into and out of the southeast of Liberia, which are pivotal in unleashing the potentials the region holds.

My thoughts and prayers are with all those and their families who suffered in varied ways by the loss of life, goods, or are inflicted with trauma as survivors from the tragic sinking of the MV Niko Ivanka enroute to the southeast of Liberia.

Signed: + Andrew Karnley
Most Rev. Andrew J. Karnley
Bishop of Cape Palmas

Date: July 21, 2021