



Office of the Minister

REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Capitol Hill, P. O. Box 9008
1000 Monrovia, 10 Liberia



General Circular No.15

Monrovia, December 13, 2021: The attention of the Ministry of Internal and National Council of Chiefs have been drawn to practices and actions by individuals and groups claiming to represent traditional leaders and Zoes that violate standing administrative guidelines and regulations governing the conduct and operations of Poro and Sande Societies in Liberia, as well as the constitutional rights of freedom of movement and the freedom of association within the Republic of Liberia.

The repeated violations of these guidelines and regulations, in key sections of Liberia have caused and continue to cause embarrassment to the Government and people of Liberia, trauma to affected persons and families, and interruptions to normal lives of citizens and residents; thereby undermining the Government's efforts to ensure that the constitutional rights and civil liberties of all citizens and residents are respected and upheld.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs also condemns all forms of forcible initiations into Poro or Sande Society anywhere within the territorial confines of the Republic of Liberia.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs urges all Zoes, elders and chiefs throughout the Republic of Liberia to carry out their functions within the confines of the traditional laws and guidelines governing the practices of Poro and Sande societies.

Consequently, the Ministry of internal Affairs, in consultation with the National Council of Chiefs, reiterates and stipulates that:

1. No Poro and Sande Zoe or operator shall initiate a child/children or any student into a grove during the normal school year. The is to avoid interference or disruption of normal school activities and impede the academic progress of students;
2. No Poro and Sande Zoe, Elder, Chief or local government officer shall establish a Poro or Sande grove within the legally established city limits in Liberia. All groves; Poro and Sande so established, shall be clearly identified and marked to avoid unintentional encroachment by non-initiates or others.
3. All non-initiate males, females, other citizens and residents are urged to exercise caution not to encroach upon Poro and Sande grove Shrine.
4. No Poro and Sande Zoe, Elder, Chief or local government officer is allowed to set-up road-blocks under the pretext of culture and tradition. Such road-blocks shall be deemed violation of the right to movement and punishable by law.

The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Internal Affairs therefore urges all Zoes, Elders, Chiefs and other local government officers to ensure that those who may be engaged in Poro and Sande activities to respect the provisions of this Administrative Circular, and uphold and protect the rights of citizens and residents with the Republic of Liberia to move and live freely.

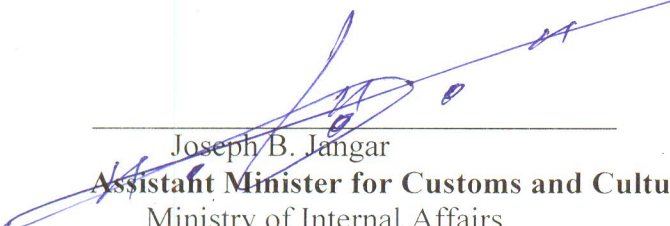
The Minister of Internal Affairs has requested the Bureau of Customs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Culture in collaboration with the National Council of Chiefs to review all operational licenses of Poro and Sande groves, herbalists and traditional healers with the aim of re-registering them fully signed by the National Chairman of the National Council of Chiefs with approval of the Minister of Internal Affairs.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs through the Bureau of Customs and Culture, in collaboration with the National Council of Chiefs wishes to emphasis that Poro and Sande practitioners found in violation of this Circular and previously issued Administrative **Circulars**, which contain the approved guidelines governing the practice of Poro and Sande societies in Liberia, shall be penalized in keeping with the guidelines, regulations, and practices of traditions and laws, including **finest, dismissal of operators and supervisors found on government payroll, and the closure of their Poro and Sande Groves.**

The Ministry of Internal Affairs also reaffirms Government's full support to the maintenance of healthy, traditional and cultural practices in Liberia.

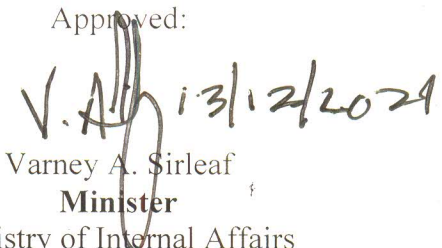
Finally, the Ministry of Internal Affairs reaffirms provisions of **General Circular No. 12 of January 15, 2013, General Circular No 13 of June 2, 2014 and General Circular No 14 of June 24, 2019** which among other things state "...the forceful initiation of any person (adult or child) into a cultural practice or a traditional ritual is also prohibited without supervision of the individuals duly approved by the Bureau of Customs and Culture and the National Council of Chiefs and a license duly issued over the signature of the Minister of Internal Affairs' of the Republic of Liberia".

Signed:


Joseph B. Jangar
Assistant Minister for Customs and Culture
Ministry of Internal Affairs


Chief Zanzan Karwor
Chairman
National Council of Chiefs

Approved:


Varney A. Sirleaf
Minister
Ministry of Internal Affairs