

Statement by His Excellency Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr. President of the Republic of Liberia At The Memorial Service of Former President William Richard Tolbert, Jr.

Centennial Pavilion, Ashmun Street, Monrovia, Liberia.

Tuesday, July 1, 2025

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislature;

Madam Former President;

Mr. Superintendent;

Officials of Government;

Madam Former Vice President;

Members of the Clergy;

Members of the Tolbert Family;

Distinguished Guests;

The Media;

My Fellow Liberians:

We assemble here in solemn remembrance to honor the life and legacy of a statesman, a patriot, and a servant of the people, the late President William Richard Tolbert, Jr. This moment is also one of reflection, reconciliation, and national renewal.

Today, we gather to memorialize, with full dignity and honor, a son of Liberia whose story is deeply connected to the history of our republic.

President Tolbert led Liberia during a time of tremendous transition, both at home and across the African continent.

As the twentieth President of Liberia and a former Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, he was known for his visionary leadership, his bold reforms, his Pan African spirit, his enduring belief in the young people of Liberia, social justice, economic empowerment, and the unification of all Liberians. He was a towering personality abroad and commanded much respect from the international community.

He was a man of deep conviction and immense discipline. A Baptist preacher by calling and a statesman by duty, he brought to the presidency a sense of moral clarity and a deep commitment to building a nation where all Liberians could find dignity in their citizenship. His leadership was grounded in humility, integrity, and service.

I did not serve under President Tolbert, but like so many of my generation, I was inspired by his intellect, his values, and his steadfast pursuit of a more equitable Liberia. His policies sought to bridge divides, uplift the poor, and expand opportunity. His vision for national development was anchored in the belief that

Liberia could only thrive when justice and inclusion became the pillars of our democracy.

This memorial, decades after his tragic death, is not simply a ceremonial gesture. It is an act of national conscience. It is a moment to restore dignity, to acknowledge historical wrongs, and to reaffirm our collective commitment to truth, justice, and reconciliation.

We cannot reflect on this moment without acknowledging the long arc of pain that has shaped our nation's journey.

From the founding of Liberia and the unhealed tensions of the past, to the violent change of governments, and the tragic loss of nearly two hundred fifty thousand lives during our brutal civil conflict, Liberia has borne the wounds of history.

These wrongs have left scars, but they have also left us with a responsibility—a responsibility to turn our sorrows into seeds of hope, to draw from our pain a renewed sense of purpose, and to ensure that the sacrifices of the past were not in vain.

We must let our shared suffering become the foundation of our shared strength. Let us allow our collective memory to serve not as a point of division, but as a force for unity. Let the stories of loss and resilience instill in us a deeper sense of patriotism and a lasting commitment to peace, justice, and reconciliation.

To the Tolbert family, I extend the deepest sympathy of a grateful nation. Your father, your grandfather, your relative served this nation with distinction. Your lives of tolerance have been irreproachable and magnanimous. I urge you to continue to honor his memory not only through mourning but through purposeful contribution to national unity and healing.

To all Liberians, this occasion must inspire a renewed sense of patriotism. Let us reject the forces that divide us. Let us choose peace over vengeance, unity over discord, and progress over stagnation. The Liberia we seek to build must be one where the legacy of our leaders is honored with truth, with respect, and with accountability.

May this solemn occasion be a reminder that history must not be forgotten, and that reconciliation must be pursued not out of convenience but out of conviction.

Let us teach the younger generation about the life and leadership of President Tolbert, not only as a former head of state, but as a symbol of faith, hope, and dignity in public service.

May the soul of President William Richard Tolbert, Jr. rest in perfect peace.

May God bless us all and save our Republic.

Thank you.