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Tyler, Kollie, Ricks Toweh Caught in Smelly Global Witness Report



By Super User

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The image shows the front cover of a Global Witness report titled "DESTROYERS OF THE FORESTS". The title is prominently displayed in large red and blue letters. Below the title, a quote from the report states: "All of Liberia's large logging contracts are fundamentally illegal, a fact that if not addressed immediately could undermine the important work being undertaken by the government and its partners to ensure Liberia's forests do not again fuel conflict and corruption. Global Witness has collected evidence demonstrating that logging companies are illegally owned or controlled by politicians such as House of Representatives members Alex Tyler, Moses Kollie, and Ricks Toweh." - Global Witness Report. The cover features three black and white portraits of men: Alex Tyler (top left), Moses Kollie (bottom left), and Ricks Toweh (bottom right). The background of the cover shows a landscape of cut logs and stumps, symbolizing deforestation. The FPA logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the image.

Monrovia – Booked in another smelly Global Witness Report, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, J. Alex Tyler and some of his cohorts in the House of Representatives have been named as owners of logging companies that have lied, cheated and stolen from the Liberian people through illegal logging activities.

Report by Lennart Dodoo – ldodoo@frontpageafricaonline.com

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“Global Witness has collected evidence demonstrating that logging companies are illegally owned or controlled by politicians such as House of Representatives members Alex Tyler, Moses Kollie, and Ricks Toweh” – Global Witness (Full report)

There are evidence, according to the new report – Holding The Line – that the companies behind four of Liberia’s logging contracts are illegally owned or controlled by Liberian legislators or members of their families.

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“Global Witness has collected evidence demonstrating that logging companies are illegally owned or controlled by politicians such as House of Representatives members Alex Tyler, Moses Kollie, and Ricks Toweh,” the Global Witness

One of such companies, according to the report, is the International Consultants Capital (ICC) which is partly-owned by Representatives Moses Kollie and Tyler.

Tyler, the report said, denied being a shareholder in the company, despite the 2007 Articles of Incorporation of the company shows Tyler as a 15 percent shareholder of ICC, while Rep. Kollie owns 6 percent shares.

"Other company documents show that Liberian Tree & Trading Co. is controlled by the wife of Representative Ricks Toweh.

Additionally, real ownership information for companies behind six contracts – including those owned or controlled by Representatives Toweh, Kollie, and Tyler – was not reported to LEITI as required when the agency was compiling its 2015 Beneficial Ownership Report," the report noted.

LEITI is the Liberia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative which is a global coalition of governments, companies and civil society working together to improve transparency and accountability in the management of revenues from natural resources.

The six illegally awarded contracts include: FMCA which was awarded to Alpha Logging and Wood Processing, Inc. in a bidding process believed to be flawed with violations of the Forestry Development Authority Regulations.

FMC B: Contract awarded to EJ&J Investment Corp. EJ&J is operated by Mandra Forestry Liberia Ltd. (Mandra), according to the Global Witness.

"In 2008, Companies bidding for FMC B (and FMC A and FMC C) came to an agreement with two FDA officials that the final contract payment terms would be changed so as to reduce the companies' financial obligations to the government by 96 percent.

Following their approval by the FDA Board but prior to being signed by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the terms of these FMC contracts were changed in line with this agreement.

It is possible that EJJ was one of the companies negotiating this agreement as subsequent changes to financial obligations were made to EJJ FMC B. Such a deal was illegal as only a committee appointed by the Inter Ministerial Concessions Committee can negotiate a logging contract," Global Witness.

FMC C: Contract Awarded To Liberia Tree & Trading Company, Inc. operated By Mandra Forestry Liberia Ltd. (Mandra). As of April 2012, Nyunyn Toweh – wife of Representative Ricks Toweh – was Acting President of LTTC, and as of August 2016 remained the company's main point of contact.

As early as 2008 and possibly as late as March 2012, LTTC was headed by Representative Ricks Toweh himself. Representative Toweh took his seat in the Liberian Legislature in January 2012.

LTTC was awarded FMC C in 2008. It is illegal for Liberian Legislators or their family members to hold logging contracts.

Contract FMC F awarded to Euro-Liberia Logging Co. (Euro) – in 2015, logging companies were required to provide LEITI with a list of their ultimate, or “beneficial” owners. Euro failed to provide such a report to LEITI.

Contract FMC I was awarded to Geblo Logging INC. (GEBLO) operated by Plant Pool Liberia Inc.

As of November 2016, Geblo owed the Liberian government US\$ 4,387,070 in rental fees and arrears from previously-unpaid fees for FMC I. The company has consistently failed to pay its financial obligations since it was first awarded its contract, in 2009.

International Consultant Capital (ICC) operated by Forest Venture Inc. was awarded FMC K. This contract was awarded to the company despite members of the House of Representatives were listed as shareholders in its Articles of Incorporation.

Atlantic Resources Liberia (ARL) was awarded contract FMC P, despite in 2009, the company colluded with a second company – Southeast Resources, which shares management and finances with ARL – to bid for an FMC contract. Both companies submitted their bids for the contract in the same envelope.

CFMA 1 license was awarded to Neezombie-Gbao Community; sub-contracted to A & M Enterprises Inc. and operated by Liberian Hardwood Corp.

The Community Forestry Management Body (CFMB) did not prepare the CFMA. The CFMA was signed in August 2011, but the CFMB was not created until May 2013, 20 months later. A CFMA is invalid if it is not prepared by a CFMB.

CFMA 2: License awarded To Blouquia Community; Sub-Contracted to A&M Enterprises Inc. (AM).

CFMA 3: License awarded To Bluyeama Community; Sub-Contracted to Sing Africa Plantations Liberia Inc. (Sing).

The CFMB did not prepare the CFMA. The CFMA was signed in January 2012, but the CFMB was not created until March 2012, two months later.¹⁰⁷ A CFMA is invalid if it is not prepared by a CFMB.

Key Findings in the Report

Companies are hiding their owners. In an effort to root out corrupt deals, the Liberian government requires logging companies to declare their real, or “beneficial,” owners.

However, in 2015 when the government demanded this information, the companies behind half of Liberia’s logging contracts ignored the demand: five failed to provide the government with any information, while one company filed incorrect data, hiding that it is actually owned by powerful politicians.

Companies are failing to pay their taxes, currently owing an immense US\$25 million to the cash-strapped Liberian government, which if paid would amount to nearly five percent of Liberia’s entire budget.

Companies have illegally-manipulated their logging data on a massive scale, concealing how many trees they are actually felling.

Companies are co-opting community forest licenses – government permits designed help rural people manage their forests.

Evidence shows that five large community licenses have been awarded illegally, with companies encouraging people who do not represent communities to obtain licenses for large forests without first doing necessary mapping and socio-economic surveys.

Liberia is home to 40 percent of West Africa’s best remaining forest, the Upper Guinean Rainforest. During Liberia’s civil war, which ended in 2003, logging companies propped up the regime of Charles Taylor and trafficked arms.

Following the war, Liberia and its partners – including the EU, Norway, the US, and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative – worked to reform the sector.

These reforms have resulted in both better laws and increased government capacity, but also in new logging licenses covering ten percent of the country,

“Liberia’s forest reform programmes have been good for the country and should be supported,” said Gant.

“But the Liberian government and international donors must also face up to the fact that big logging companies are corrupting Liberia in a way which threatens to unravel progress on the country’s hard-fought gains.”

Hold the Line also describes how Liberia and its partners can confront illegal logging companies and ensure that their reform programs work. Key among these recommendations are:

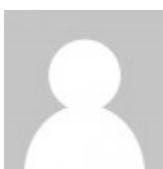
EU, which has signed a treaty with Liberia promoting trade in legal timber called a Voluntary Partnership Agreement, should make clear it will not allow timber from Liberia’s current large contracts into Europe.

Norway, which has signed a US\$ 150 million deal with Liberia promoting community forestry and conservation, should ensure Liberia investigates and cancels illegal contracts as the country promised in the deal.

The Liberian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, which requires natural resource companies to declare their real, or “beneficial,” owners, should penalize companies that have failed to report or reported incorrect ownership information.

 Post Views: 1,164

 Global Witness Timber Tyler



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