



procedures. The implications of the Supreme Court ruling will be made clear this week when the lower court acts. In addition to presenting additional logistical and financial challenges to the NEC, some Liberians fear that this ruling may open the process for more challenges in the less than three weeks before the election.

In another case before the Supreme Court, Attorney Marcus R. Jones brought a case on behalf of himself and four others whose nomination documents were rejected by the NEC because they lacked the requisite number of registered voters' signatures. The rejected presidential candidates argue that, although they submitted their paperwork to the NEC on the final day of the nomination process, they still should have been allowed the seven-day grace period to amend their documentation. A ruling from the Supreme Court is expected early this week.

Another case concerned a Liberian resident of the United States who did not register to vote, which is a requirement for candidacy, but who unsuccessfully sought nomination as a candidate. The final case involved a presidential aspirant whose political party joined a coalition that chose someone else as its standard bearer, allegedly without consultation with the rejected candidate's party. The Supreme Court has ruled against the petitioners in both of these cases.

### **Enforcing the Campaign Finance Regulations**

Liberia's first campaign finance regulations, adopted in July 2005, required each political party and independent candidate to form a "campaign committee," with a designated treasurer and a depository bank, and to register that committee with the NEC by August 31, 2005. In addition, annual financial reports of all political parties, which are required by the Liberian Constitution but rarely enforced, were due on September 1. In response to civil society calls for enforcement of these deadlines, the NEC has posted the annual reports on the Internet. Meanwhile, the Campaign Monitoring Coalition (CMC), a civil society group, published a scathing report, based on the observations of 24 monitors around the country, alleging use of state resources and actions "tantamount to vote buying" by many political parties and candidates. CMC also sent letters to all political parties reminding them of the obligation to submit annual financial reports. The next submission of a campaign finance report is due on October 1, and a final report is due on October 26. The NEC has 60 days after each deadline to conduct a discretionary audit. CMC is seeking to have the NEC make the October 1 reports public immediately so that voters can use this information in determining which parties and candidates to vote for.

### **Recruiting and Training of Poll Workers**

The NEC began training approximately 18,000 Election Day poll workers on September 8, when NEC Magistrates and their United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) counterparts underwent a three-day training of trainers session on polling and counting procedures. These individuals are now training county teams, who in turn are instructing the polling staff on the procedures to be followed on polling day. This cascade training is well underway in most counties. An average polling place on Election Day will be staffed by six people and will accommodate up to 600 voters. Smaller polling places will have four or five polling officials. Most of the 4,000 staff who worked on the voter registration exercise for Election Day have been re-hired, many as Presiding Officers for Election Day. The NEC is prioritizing hiring local residents as polling

officials in order to reduce costs, simplify logistics, and benefit from their knowledge of local languages and communities

### Concerns about IDP Participation

The NEC has expressed concern that disruptions in camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) may create problems during the upcoming elections. When IDPs registered to vote, they were given the opportunity to indicate whether they preferred to cast their ballots in their counties of origin or in their IDP camps. Seventy-one percent of IDPs registered to vote in their counties of origin. IDPs who chose to vote in their counties of origin and have returned to those counties can cast ballots for President and Vice-President, Senate and House of Representatives (the NEC has stated that as many as 35,000 IDPs fall into this category, though definitive data is not available). IDPs who registered to vote in the IDP camps will be able to cast ballots for all three races in the counties and districts in which their camps are located. In places where camps have subsequently been closed, the NEC will open polling places where the camps used to be for IDPs registered to vote there.

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