



Press Release: Illegal Logging Ignoring Liberia's Environmental Laws

March 3, 2009
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Tarpeh Timber has begun logging illegally in Grand Bassa County. Sustainable Development Institute and the Association of Environmental Lawyers of Liberia (Green Advocates) recently visited Grand Bassa and found overwhelming evidence that Tarpeh Timber has begun felling trees in violation of the forestry law, the FDA's regulations and the environmental law of Liberia.

Tarpeh is not allowed to fell trees in Grand Bassa: its actions are illegal. The law requires Tarpeh to follow environmental guidelines to make sure that its actions will not damage the environment and will allow future generations to enjoy the forests. According to the National Forestry Reform Law, Section 5.3.(b)(iv), the FDA Regulation 105-07, Sections 24 and 41, and the Environmental Protection and Management Law, Sections. 14 to 23, no logging may be carried out by a Timber Sale Contract (TSC) or Forest Management Contract (FMC) holder without an Environmental Impacts Assessment (EIA) certificate from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of Liberia. Under the Environment Protection Agency Act, Sections 37 and 38, if such logging occurs without a valid EIA the logging contract must be cancelled.

Tarpeh Timber knows this law, and according to a January 22nd letter to Tarpeh from the EPA, has been warned not to log in violation of it. Additionally, Tarpeh acknowledged the necessity of receiving an EPA certification in its modified draft EIA (Section 3.2.1, page 14). However, according to the Environmental Protection Agency's EIA Coordinator Varney Konneh, Tarpeh has not received an approved final EIA.¹ The EPA is the government agency responsible for approving the EIA. Without the EPA's approved EIA, the company cannot fell trees.

According to Thomas Pichet of Société Générale de Surveillance, the company responsible for tracking the felling activities of Liberian logging companies, "if Tarpeh has not received approval on a final EIA logging should stop until the Tarpeh has met its requirements and received an approved EIA. SGS will not include logs into its chain of custody system until a valid EIA has been signed by the EPA." SGS has begun investigating whether the EIA it was

¹ Telephone conversation (inquiry) with Varney Konneh at EPA on March 2, 2009

shown by the FDA was, in fact, final and has requested Tarpeh Timber to stop logging operations until a valid EIA is secured.²

The actions of Tarpeh are only the most recent example of how the forestry laws in Liberia, designed to protect our people and our forests while promoting development, are being brushed aside. It is crucial that Tarpeh be stopped, and that they be punished according to the law.

For additional questions or for digital images of Tarpeh's logging operations, please contact:

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² Email correspondence with Thomas Pichet, Société Générale de Surveillance on March 2, 2009.