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Lenin Ndebele

George Weah loses Liberia's presidency race - but becomes a beacon of democracy in the region

Джордж Веа програє президентські перегони в Ліберії, але стає маяком демократії в регіоні

Колишній форвард «ПСЖ» та «Мілана» і володар «Золотого м'яча» Джордж Веа визнав, що лідер опозиції Джозеф Бокаї виграв у нього в другому турі президентських виборів у Ліберії в 2023 р. 57-річний Д. Веа був 25-м президентом Ліберії, він керує країною з початку 2018 року. Тоді він у другому турі голосування виграв саме у Д. Бокаї. Д. Веа передасть владу у січні 2024 року. Це буде друга за два десятиліття мирна передача влади в Ліберії від одного демократично обраного уряду іншому. Міжнародна спільнота похвалила його за згоду на плавний перехід. У своїй промові, зверненій до своїх прихильників, Д. Веа сказав: «Я закликаю вас наслідувати мій приклад і прийняти результати виборів».

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George Weah accepted defeat after 99% of the votes had been counted in an election run-off.
The international community commended Liberia for a violence-free transition.
Ecowas said Liberia showed that change could come via peaceful means.
Celebrated as a footballer, then head of state, now George Weah will go down in history as someone who gave rare hope to democracy in West Africa at a time when coups and unconstitutional changes of government were making a comeback.

Weah, 57, conceded defeat before the final count at the election run-off of 14 November, paving the way for a smooth transition as former vice-president Joseph Boakai, who turns 79 next week, becomes the new head of state.

Boakai will be sworn in sometime in January next year.

In his speech accepting defeat, Weah said: "It was time to put national interest above personal interest.

"The Congress for Democratic Change has lost the election, but Liberia has won. This is the time for graciousness in defeat."

It was a narrow loss, as Weah polled 49.36% against 50.64% for Boakai.

The international community commended Weah for accepting the smooth transition.

Mark Andrew Green, who heads the Wilson Centre, an American think tank, said in a statement on his X account that Liberia was a beacon of hope for West Africa.

"West Africa has seen more than its share of struggles and threats, so let us celebrate the good news.

"In Liberia, with President George Weah's concession speech, we're seeing a peaceful transition from one democratically elected leader to another... too rare in these turbulent times," he said.

Liberia is one of the African countries to have experienced dark episodes of civil war.

The first civil war lasted from 1989 to 1997, while the second began in 1999 and ended in 2003.

Both claimed more than 250 000 lives and displaced more than one million people.

The end of the civil war presented the country with a fresh start towards democracy.

Weah lost in an election won by the first female president in Africa, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, in 2006.

Johnson Sirleaf was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011.
Liberia: citizens hail Weah's concession in light of election results
Nyanjura Doreen Omutatina, a Ugandan politician and human rights activist, said in a statement that developments in Liberia were a "plus for the African continent, and it should inspire us who are still under the heavy heel of despotism to know that there is no night, however long, that does not end with dawn."

United States Department of State spokesperson Matthew Miller, in a note to the media, said: "We congratulate Liberia's institutions on a successful electoral process, especially the dedicated work of the National Elections Commission and the thousands of Liberians who worked the polls."

In his speech directed to his supporters, Weah said: "I urge you to follow my example and accept the results of the elections."

The Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) took pride in the fact Liberia had shown the region that "change is possible through peaceful means."

In the West African coup belt, Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Sudan are under the rule of military commanders.