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Togo: Authorities have failed to live up to their commitments and human rights situation has stagnated

According to Amnesty International's report published today, Togo's human rights situation has stagnated and the authorities have failed to live up to the commitments made to the international community five years ago, as President Faure Gnassingbé marks his 11 years in power.

The report *"Togo: Human rights – A long way to go"* shows that the authorities have ignored or only partially implemented several of the recommendations made to Togo in the previous Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2011. It includes Amnesty International's assessment and recommendations for the second cycle of the UPR process that will take place next October/November.

"During these last five years, security forces have killed and injured many people during peaceful demonstrations, journalists and human rights defenders have been arrested, prison conditions have failed to meet international standards and impunity for human rights violations persists", said François Patuel, Researcher for West Africa at Amnesty International.

"While the international community has called on the country to make efforts, the human rights situation has not improved and this must change."

Peaceful assemblies organized by political parties or human rights defenders are often arbitrarily banned and dispersed by the police, gendarmerie or the armed forces, and their organizers often face reprisals and arbitrary arrests.

In November, seven people were killed and at least 117 others wounded, including pregnant women and children, during demonstrations in Mango in northern Togo. In March 2015, at least 30 people, including a woman and a child, were wounded at a student rally in the city of Gléi. At least one person subsequently died of injuries sustained.

The authorities continue to curtail freedom of expression and to target journalists, human rights defenders and political activists who express dissent.

In February 2012, Koffi Kounté, President of the National Human Rights Commission, received threats from the entourage of the Head of State after he refused to endorse a

report provided by the government concerning several cases of torture. Fearing reprisals, Koffi Kounté took refuge in France.

Torture and other ill-treatment are regularly used by security forces at the time of arrest and during pre-trial detention to extract confessions or implicate defendants. In November 2015, several men arrested during protests in Mango were subjected to ill-treatments.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people suffer discrimination as the Criminal Code criminalizes same-sex relationships between consenting adults. In addition, they often face harassment and arbitrary detention by security forces.

In July 2013, the Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) ruled there had been acts of torture inflicted on Kpatcha Gnassingbé and his co-detainees. Seven men concerned by this case remain in arbitrary detention as of May 2016. No perpetrators of these acts of torture have been brought to court.

Amongst other recommendations, Amnesty International calls on the government of Togo to amend laws regulating the use of force and those that violate the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly; and to promptly, thoroughly and impartially investigate all allegations of arbitrary arrest and detention, intimidation, threats, harassment and attacks against human rights defenders. The authorities should also protect, respect and fulfil human rights for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.

"The international community needs to be more vigilant as regards the development of the human rights situation in Togo in the context of the closure of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Lomé in 2015", said François Patuel.

Public document

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