

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Legal Concern

3 December 1991

TOGO: Joseph Kokou Koffigoh, Prime Minister of Togo

Joseph Kokou Koffigoh was arrested at his Prime Ministerial residence on 3 December and is being held by members of the armed forces. A lawyer and former President of the *Ligue togolaise des droits de l'homme*, Togolese Human Rights League, he was appointed Prime Minister of Togo's transitional government in August 1991. Amnesty International believes he is a prisoner of conscience held on account of his non-violent political activities and is appealing for his immediate and unconditional release. Other leading political figures have been asked to report to army headquarters.

Joseph Kokou Koffigoh's arrest followed several days' negotiations about the political future of the country between himself and President Eyadema after the army seized power on 28 November 1991. During this period, the armed forces surrounded his residence and took control of the national radio. In seizing power, the army rejected recent political reforms including a civilian transitional government introduced in mid-1991 by a national conference of advocates of democracy. In a public statement made by the army, former Minister of Defence, General Mawulikplimi Ameyi, spoke in support of President Eyadema, dissolved the transitional government and annulled all decisions taken by the national conference, but he said that authorised political parties would be able to function and that the draft constitution would remain in effect.

On 27 November, there was violent unrest in Lomé, following an order made the previous day by the transitional parliament banning the *Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais*, (RPT), the former ruling party. Soldiers loyal to President Eyadema briefly occupied the national radio and television stations to demand that the ban be lifted.

Amnesty International appealed to President Eyadema on 28 November to ensure that no-one was arrested on account of their non-violent political activities, that anyone arrested on criminal charges should be brought promptly and fairly to trial, and that the security forces should be instructed that human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions and torture, constitute criminal offences.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Between March and June 1991, growing opposition to President Eyadema's government saw numerous demonstrations and strikes calling for political reforms promised in 1990 and a National Conference to discuss such reforms.

After months of violent confrontations, the government agreed to introduce a multi-party political system and hold a National Conference - this ran from July to August 1991. It examined human rights violations since President Eyadema came to power in 1967 and elected Joseph Kokou Koffigoh as Prime Minister. He nominated a transitional government to take executive decisions until elections in early 1992 with President Eyadema remaining as Head of State during this transitional period. Both the President and the Prime Minister were to be barred from standing for Presidential election. During and since the National Conference, the army has tried to halt the process of reform, and in October made an earlier attempt to kidnap Prime Minister Koffigoh.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/express and airmail letters:
Please write courteously worded appeals, in French if possible:**

- expressing concern at the arrest on 3 December 1991 of Prime Minister Koffigoh by members of the armed forces;
- seeking assurances that he is not subjected to any form of ill-treatment or torture while he remains in custody and that he is allowed visits by his relatives and legal counsel;
- explaining that Amnesty International believes Prime Minister Koffigoh to be a prisoner of conscience, arrested solely on account of his non-violent political activities, and urging that he should be released unconditionally and immediately;
- seeking information about whether other people have been arrested in this context and assurances that they too will be protected from ill-treatment and allowed visits while in custody.

APPEALS TO:

Son Excellence Monsieur le Général Gnassingbé EYADEMA
Président de la République
Palais présidentiel
Avenue de la Marina
Lomé
Togo

**Monsieur le
Président
Dear President**

**Telegrams: President Eyadema, Lome, Togo
Telexes: 5201 presitogo**

Général Mawulikplimi Ameyi
Camp militaire Tokoin
Boulevard des Armées
Lomé
Togo

**Monsieur le Général
Dear General**

Telegrams: General Ameyi, Camp militaire Tokoin, Lome, Togo

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Togo in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 14 January 1992.