

TOGO

The Togolese government has responded with furious denunciations, the arrest of human rights defenders and the torture of an Amnesty International member to AI's latest report on Togo, published in May 1999. The report documents hundreds of killings, systematic use of torture, and arbitrary detention. The Togolese authorities have made no attempt to open investigations into human rights violations, or begin proceedings to bring those responsible to justice. The government is attempting to sue Amnesty International and has launched a high-profile publicity campaign against the organization.

Amnesty International's report, *Togo: Rule of Terror* questions the role of French military assistance and exports to Togo, which have contributed to human rights violations, and calls on the French authorities to suspend all military, security and police transfers that are likely to contribute to further human rights violations. On 20 July, prior to his visit to Togo, Amnesty International publicly called on French President Jacques Chirac to urge the Togolese authorities to put an end to impunity, and allow an international investigation into all human rights violations.

During his visit to Togo President Chirac stated that AI's report was probably the result of "manipulation", and that "no direct or indirect testimonies corroborated AI's findings." To Amnesty International's knowledge, the French authorities have made no concrete effort to support an independent investigation of human rights violations in Togo. Amnesty International's appeals to the French government to suspend military and security transfers contributing to human rights violations have also remained without response.

Amnesty International is not alone in raising concerns about extrajudicial executions in Togo. Following the release of *Togo: Rule Of Terror*, independent press reports confirmed that corpses had been found on beaches in Togo and Benin. The 19 July report of the *Ligue Béninoise des Droits de l'Homme* [LBDH] contained accounts of at least a hundred bodies floating in the sea in front of the Benin beaches.

Amnesty International has repeatedly called for an independent and impartial investigation into human rights violations perpetrated in Togo in the last decades, including extrajudicial executions, ill-treatment, torture, "disappearances". On 23 July, a Togolese government lawyer announced that the Togolese authorities had agreed to an international investigation into human rights violations in Togo.

Amnesty International urges the Togolese authorities to invite the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the Special Rapporteur on torture and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to visit Togo; or else to make sure that any international commission set up to investigate human rights violations conforms to internationally accepted standards. Amnesty International also urges President Chirac and the French government to publicly denounce human rights violations in Togo, to immediately suspend all military and security transfers and exports likely to contribute to human rights violations, and to put pressure on the Togolese government to invite the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the Special Rapporteur on torture and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to visit Togo.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Hundreds of civilians and soldiers have been extrajudicially executed in Togo. The practice of arbitrary detention has been on-going. A large number of civilians have been detained for months, even years, without charge or trial. The security forces have used torture systematically for the last 10 years.

The information published in Amnesty International's May 1999 report indicates that French military and security assistance and exports have contributed to human rights violations in Togo. According to witnesses, Buffalo aircraft, made in Canada and repaired in France, are reported to have been used to drop bodies along the coasts of Togo and Benin. Evidence indicates that bullets found in August 1998 after the army attack against the houses of opposition leaders, including Jean Pierre Fabre et Gnassingbé Amah, were manufactured by the French company *Société Française de Munitions*. The provision by France of military training may have facilitated human rights violations. It is unclear what procedures are in place for screening the human rights record of applicants and the monitoring of their activities after they have finished their training programme. A high ranking officer of the Togolese Gendarmerie, who was accused by the Togo's National Commission for Human Rights of ordering the torture of four people in August 1990, was awarded the National Order of Merit by France in April 1998. Other officers, allegedly responsible for torture, have been trained in France.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in French or your own language:

1) To President Gnassingbé Eyadéma:

- expressing concern about human rights violations in Togo, including hundreds of extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrests and torture, and about the failure to bring those responsible to justice;
- urging the Togolese government 1) to invite the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the Special Rapporteur on torture and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to visit Togo or 2) to make sure that any international commission set up to investigate into human rights violations follow the internationally accepted standards;
- stressing that the commission should be independent, impartial and competent; that it should be able to investigate human rights violations perpetrated in Togo; that it should be able to move freely in Togo and in neighbouring countries, including areas where Amnesty International has documented serious cases of human rights violations; witnesses interviewed by the commission should do so freely without fear of reprisals, intimidation, harassment by the Togolese authorities; that the findings of the commission should be made public;

2) To President Chirac and the French government

- expressing concern about President Jacques Chirac's suggestion, during his visit to Togo on 23 July 1999, that Amnesty International's latest report is probably the result of "manipulation" and that "no direct or indirect testimonies corroborated Amnesty's findings";
- stressing that Amnesty International is not alone in raising its concerns, mentioning the report of the *Ligue Béninoise des Droits de l'Homme*;
- stressing that in the past 30 years, the Togolese security forces have been responsible for extrajudicial executions, "disappearances", arbitrary detentions, torture and ill-treatment, and that no action has been taken to bring those responsible to justice;
- urging them to publicly denounce human rights violations committed by the Togolese security forces;
- urging them to put pressure on the Togolese government to allow an immediate international investigation into all human rights violations perpetrated in Togo in the last decades, and to make sure that this investigation is independent and impartial and that its findings are made public;
- urging them to take appropriate steps to suspend all transfers to Togo of military and security assistance, equipment and training likely to contribute to human rights violations in Togo.

APPEALS TO:

Monsieur le Général Gnassingbé Eyadéma
Président de la République
Palais Présidentiel
Avenue de la Marina
Lomé, Togo

Fax. + 228 21 18 97

email: <http://www.republicoftogo.com/english/ecrir-pdt.html>

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President

Monsieur Jacques CHIRAC
Président de la République française
Palais de l'Elysée
55-57 rue du Faubourg St. Honoré
75008 PARIS
France

Fax. +33 1 47 42 24 65

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President

M. Lionel Jospin
Premier Ministre
Hôtel Matignon
57, rue de Varenne
75007 PARIS
FRANCE

Fax. + 33 1 42 75 75 04

Salutation: Monsieur le Premier Ministre / Dear Prime Minister

COPIES of letters to the French government:

M. Laurent Fabius
Président de l'Assemblée Nationale
Hôtel de Lassay
128 rue de l'Université
75355 Paris CEDEX 07 SP
Fax: +33 1 40 63 59 93

Copies of all letters to the following Togolese newspapers:

La Tribune Africaine
s/c La Maison du Journalisme
BP 81213 Lomé, Togo

Crocodile
BP 60087 Lomé
Togo

and to diplomatic representatives of Togo and France accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY