

PUBLIC

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Fear of torture/Prisoner of Conscience

25 February 2003

TOGO

**Marc Palanga (m), leader of the *Union des forces du changement* (UFC),
Union of Forces for Change**

Marc Palanga, a local leader of the *Union des forces du changement* (UFC), Union of Forces for Change, is being held at Kara Gendarmerie (Police station) in northern Togo, following his arrest on 22 February. There are concerns for his safety as he has received medical treatment at Camp Landja, military barracks, possibly for injuries sustained whilst being tortured.

On 9 February, Marc Palanga and five other UFC members were arrested by police officers from Kara. On at least two occasions they were taken to Camp Landja and tortured by Togolese military personnel. No reason was ever given for their arrest and they were released without charge on 17 February.

Shortly after his release Marc Palanga went to Sokodé, central Togo, where he received treatment for the injuries sustained while in detention from 9 to 17 February 2003. He was re-arrested on 22 February on suspicion of having held a meeting in Sokodé. Amnesty International believes that Marc Palanga has been arrested solely on account of his peaceful involvement with the UFC and considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International receives regular reports of the arrest, torture, intimidation and harassment of members of the opposition in Togo, especially in the north of the country which is the stronghold of President Gnassingbé Eyadéma's ruling party. Marc Palanga was previously arrested in October 2001 and sentenced to six months' imprisonment after being convicted of the defamation of the President's son, Ernest Gnassingbé. During the past decade, the organization has documented scores of cases where victims have been targeted because of their political or human rights activities, particularly around the time of important elections. The Togolese Presidential elections are due to take place later this year.

Amnesty International has repeatedly raised its concerns with the Togolese authorities about the widespread use of torture and ill-treatment, and about the lack of safeguards provided to people held in detention. Police are allowed by law to detain people in custody for up to 48 hours, before bringing them before a judge. The period of detention is renewable once, with the authorization of the Public Prosecutor. In its concluding observations on Togo in October 2002, the United Nations Human Rights Committee, considering its periodic report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, noted "*with concern the many allegations that torture is common practice in Togo, particularly on arrest, during police custody and in places of detention.....*" Amnesty International believes that the principal reason for the persistence of torture in Togo is the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in French or your own language:

- urging the Togolese authorities to take immediate measures to prevent Marc Palanga being tortured or ill-treated and to guarantee his safety;
- stating that Amnesty International considers him to be prisoner of conscience and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release;
- requesting that a thorough investigation be conducted into the reported beatings of the six detainees held from 9 to 17 February 2003 and that those responsible be brought to justice;

- calling on the authorities to end arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and ill-treatment of members of opposition parties in Togo.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic of Togo

His Excellency /Son Excellence
Monsieur le Général Gnassingbé Eyadéma
Président de la République
Palais présidentiel, Avenue de la Marina
Lomé, Togo

Telegrams: **Président, Lomé, Togo**
Fax : **+ 228 221 32 04 (Please specify : « À l'attention du Président de la République »)**
Email : **presidence@republicoftogo.com**
Salutation : **Dear President/Monsieur le Président**

Minister of Interior

Monsieur Akila Eso Boko
Ministre de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité
Ministère de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité
Rue Albert Sarraut
Lomé, Togo

Telegram: **Ministre de l'Intérieur, Lomé, Togo**
Email : **info@republicoftogo.com (This address is used by all ministeries, so please specify : « À l'attention du ministre de l'Intérieur »)**
Salutation : **Dear Minister / Monsieur le Ministre**

Minister of Justice

Katari Foly-Bazi
Ministre de la Justice et Garde des Sceaux
Ministère de la Justice, Avenue de la Marina
Rue Colonel le Roux
Lomé, Togo

Telegram : **Ministre de la Justice, Lomé, Togo**
Fax : **+ 228 221 22 06**
Salutation : **Dear Minister/ Monsieur le Ministre**

COPIES TO: Diplomatic representatives of Togo accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 8 April 2003.