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Togolese authorities shut Amnesty International out on eve of demonstrations

Accra - "I regret that the government has closed the door on the opportunity to engage directly and frankly into discussions on the human rights situation in Togo and on the ways to remedy it," said Pierre Sané, Secretary General of Amnesty International, after he was refused entry into Togo at the border point in Aflao - Ghana.

An Amnesty International delegation led by Mr Sané had traveled early Friday morning from Accra for a 3-day mission to meet government officials, the diplomatic corps, human rights organizations and families of victims of "disappearances" in Togo.

Before traveling to Lomé, the delegation had been informed that the Togolese President would not receive them, in spite of earlier assurances confirmed the day before by the Togolese authorities. The Togolese government informed the Amnesty International delegation that due to the law suit introduced by the Togolese government against the organization, the President had decided to cancel his meeting with the delegates.

At the Aflao border, Pierre Sané expressed his concerns regarding the safety of all those planning to demonstrate in Lomé on Saturday 22 May. "I am prevented from entering Togo on the eve of demonstrations planned by the opposition parties on the one hand, and the ruling party on the other. In the light of the lost lives in previous such occasions, I call on the Togolese government to ensure that freedom of expression can be exercised without fear, intimidation and violence. Amnesty International will hold the Togolese government responsible for any act of violence, use of excessive force, extrajudicial executions against the demonstrators."

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