Rachad Maman was a high-school student and youth pro-democracy protestor. On the morning of 20 September 2017, he was shot in the chest in Bafilo north of Togo when police fired live bullets at a group of peaceful protestors. Rachad Maman together with his father was taking part in a peaceful demonstration calling for constitutional reforms in Togo including an introduction of a two-term limit for the presidency, and the resignation of President Faure Gnassingbé. He died from his injuries the following day. He was 14 years old.

On Wednesday 20 September, Rachad Maman and his father arrived at the location where the demonstration was to take place at around 8 am. The peaceful demonstration took place by the roadside between the monument roundabout and the national road number 1. When the demonstration started at around 9 AM, Rachad’s father lost sight of him.

According to eye witnesses, the protestors came face to face with a group of members of the security forces including soldiers, gendarmes and police officers who were armed with weapons, tear gas and batons. At around 9:30 AM, the security forces started firing tear gas and live ammunition without any warning. The injured were transported to Bafilo Hospital by motorcycle riders and taxi drivers.

Among the wounded was Rachad, a 14-year-old high-school student who was hit by bullets in the chest. He was in critical situation when he was taken to Bafilo Hospital for treatment. It’s only around 1 PM that Rachad’s family was informed by the organiser of the demonstration that he had been injured during the demonstration.
On 21 September 2017, Rachad was transferred to Sokodé Hospital, which is better equipped and has specialist doctors. He underwent surgery at the hospital. He died during the surgery. Rachad was buried in Bafilo on Saturday 23 September 2017.

Rachad was the fifth child in a polygamous family of nine children. He was very studious at school and motivated. He was also very “curious and daring” according to his parents. Rachad was always busy. Every day after class, he would help his younger brothers with their homework before doing his own. He used to play football with the local club Centre de Développement de Football (CDF) HAKNOUR every Friday evening and Saturday mornings. On Saturdays after playing football, he used to help his old brother at his grocery store. Rachad helped his father at the farm field every Sunday.

The Maman’s hopes and dreams for Rachad have died with him. Now, Rachad will never get to achieve his dream of becoming an international football player and a businessman to help his poor family.

“**We miss Rachad. He was too young to die**”

Maimouna, Rachad’s sister

His family is trying to find out the truth about what happened to him. The family filed a lawsuit on 26th October 2017 to seek justice and reparation for the killing of Rachad.

This case seeks to illustrate the issue of impunity and the fact that police and security forces are rarely prosecuted and convicted when they commit human rights violations in Togo. There have been several incidences of excessive use of force, unlawful killings, torture and other ill-treatment during and after protests.

- During pro-democracy protests from mid-August to mid-October 2017 in Togo, 10 people—including Rachad Maman and 2 members of the military—were killed.
- Over 160 protesters were arrested and at least 28 were charged.
- Togolese also experienced two internet shutdown which lasted 9 days in total.
Please write a letter or send a fax in French or English to Togolese authorities and ask them to:

- Ensure that prompt, thorough and impartial criminal investigations are conducted into the killing of Rachad Maman;
- Prohibit the deployment of military armed forces in public order situations and amend laws regulating the use of force to bring them in line with international standards,
- Ensure that security forces in the country do not use stun grenades, tear gas and other chemicals against peaceful protesters in a way that violates international standards, and that policing of demonstrations complies with international law enforcement standards.

You can also write to your Foreign Affairs Ministry to ask to call upon Togolese ministries to implement these recommendations.
Excellency,

I am writing to bring to your attention on the case of the family of Rachad Maman. They are Togolese citizens seeking justice and accountability for the death of their son and brother.

On 20 September 2017, Rachad Maman, a 14-year-old high-school student was shot as the security forces used teargas and live ammunition to disperse him and other peaceful demonstrators in Bafilo, Togo. The protestors were calling for constitutional reforms in Togo. Rachad Maman died on 22 September 2017 while undergoing surgery for his gunshot wounds.

Everybody who knew Rachad Maman testified that he was a serious, hardworking and motivated young boy who played a central role in his family. He helped his younger siblings with their classwork and homework and would gladly help his family with any kind of domestic work.

Rachad Maman dreamed of becoming a professional football player and entrepreneur to help his family out of poverty.

His death has left his family helpless. They are now asking for one thing: justice and accountability for death of their son and brother.

Excellency, we respectfully ask that you ensure that the authorities carry out a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into the death of Rachad Maman and ensure for them to bring to justice anyone suspected to be responsible. Further, the government of Togo must provide access to other forms of reparations for Rachad Maman’s family for his death in the hands of state security forces.

Rachad Maman is one of the many victims of use of force by security forces in Togo since the beginning of demonstrations in August 2017 calling for constitutional reforms. No one has been held to account. In less than three years, Amnesty International has documented more than 16 deaths during demonstrations.

The government of Togo must also ensure that those suspected to be responsible for these human rights violations are brought to justice and the victims or their families are adequately compensated.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this request.

TO FIND OUT MORE

Please contact the Individual At Risk team at: stephanie.wambui@amnesty.org and the country team at: kinefatim.diop@amnesty; francois.patuel@amnesty.org