

PUBLIC

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UA 293/01 Prisoner of Conscience/ Torture/

21 November 2001

Harsh pri.

TOGOHoundjo Mawudzro (m) , Secretary of the National Union of Togolese Students,
Union nationale des étudiants togolais (UNET)

Prisoner of Conscience and student activist, Houndjo Mawudzro was arrested on 7 November on charges of "defamation of character and false accusation" ("atteinte à l'honneur et dénonciation calomnieuse"). He is being held at Lomé Civil prison where conditions of detention amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. This is his second arrest in less than three months. During his first detention in September, he was reportedly tortured while in custody.

Houndjo Mawudzro was initially arrested on 4 September, but released without charge on 9 September. A week after his release, he issued a press statement in which he gave details of how he had been tortured by the Gendarmerie during his detention. He stated that he was whipped with a cord and then "they [the gendarmerie]...made me sit on the floor with my feet stretched out. One beat me on my legs and tibias with a "palmatoire" (stick with a plane surface) while another one was hitting the soles of my feet".

According to reports, Houndjo Mawudzro was arrested for a second time on 7 November, when members of a student organisation with links to the Togolese authorities, The High Council of Student Associations and Movements, *Le haut conseil des associations et mouvements étudiants* (HaCAME) informed the security forces of his whereabouts. He was apparently arrested in reprisal for his public statement detailing the torture he suffered during his arrest in September.

Houndjo Mawudzro is being held at Lomé civil prison which is severely overcrowded. The prison was initially meant to accommodate a small number of inmates, but now holds around 1200 prisoners. An average of 90 people share a cell of 4m x 6m, without electricity and windows. As punishment, prisoners are often placed in a 1m x 2m cell with up to 15 others. Sanitary conditions are appalling and the sick are not separated from other prisoners. The prison has only two showers for all the prisoners, who have to pay for water in order to use them.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International continues to receive reports of torture and ill-treatment by the security forces in places of detention and prisons. Students and members of opposition political parties are among the victims.

Togo is a party to the UN Convention Against Torture, Article 13 of which obliges "each State Party [to] ensure that any individual who alleges he has been subjected to torture in any territory under its jurisdiction has the right to complaint, and to have his case promptly and impartially examined by, its competent authorities. Steps shall be taken to ensure that the complainant and witnesses are protected against all ill-treatment or intimidation as a consequence of his complaint or any evidence given"

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

- calling for Houndjo Mawudzro's immediate and unconditional release as a prisoner of conscience and urging the authorities to drop the charges brought against him;
- expressing concern that he was tortured while in custody September 2001;
- expressing concern that he was apparently rearrested in November in reprisal for his public statement detailing the torture he suffered during his first arrest in September;
- calling on the Togolese authorities to ensure that he will not be subjected to torture or any form of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment while in detention;
- reminding the Togolese authorities of their obligation under Convention Against Torture to which Togo is a party, to ensure the safety of anyone who alleges that he has been the victim of torture;
- calling on the authorities to investigate allegations of torture by members of the security forces and urging them to take immediate measures against anyone suspected of human rights violations, in accordance with international standards;
- urging the government to ensure that prison conditions in Togo meet international human rights standards, in particular the UN Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons Under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment and the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

APPEALS TO:President of Republic

Son Excellence

Monsieur le Général Gnassingbé Eyadéma

Président de la République, Palais présidentiel, Avenue de la Marina,
Lomé Togo**Telegrams: Président, Lomé, Togo****Faxes: +228 221 18 97 or 221 32 04 (A l'attention Président de la
République)****Email: presidence@republicoftogo.com****Salutation: Mr President**Minister of Interior

General Sizing Akawilou Wala

Ministre de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité

Ministère de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité, rue Albert Sarraut, Lomé, Togo

Telegrams: Ministre l'intérieur, Lomé, Togo**Email: info@republicoftogo.com (used by all ministries - please specify that
it is for the attention of Minister of Interior)****Salutation: Dear Minister**Minister de la Justice

General Seyi Mémène

Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice, Ministère de la Justice, Avenue de
la Marina, Rue Colonel le Roux, Lomé, Togo**Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Lomé, Togo****Faxes: + 228 221 22 06****Salutation: Dear Minister****COPIES TO:**

La Ligue togolaise des droits de l'homme

BP 2302, Lomé, Togo **email: ltdh@tg.refer.org**

L'association togolaise de promotion des droits de l'homme
BP 7165 Lomé, Togo

Le combat du Peuple BP 4682, Lomé, Togo **Fax + 228 22 65 89**

and 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 2 January 2002.