

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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TOGO: THE AUTHORITIES CENSOR A REPORT DENOUNCING TORTURE

Amnesty International condemns the intimidation of members of the Togolese National Human Rights Commission (*Commission nationale des droits de l'homme*, CNDH) and calls upon the authorities not to impede the diffusion of a report by the CNDH denouncing the use of torture by members of the security forces.

Amnesty International has learnt today that this report has been censored by Togolese authorities who have published instead a report exonerating security forces from all responsibility.

In protest of this censorship, the CNDH has published, today, the original report and has stated with regards to the text published by the government: *"This report which has been doctored and diverted by the authorities, who do not wish to see it published, denies the original content of the report and exonerates the security forces of all charges."*

The President of the CNDH, Koffi Kounté, who has recently received threats in relation to this report from the Head of State's inner circle, publicly stated his wish that: *"the initial report, proving that security forces had committed acts of torture and supplying victims' testimonies, be made known to all."*

Amnesty International expresses its concern about these intimidation tactics targeting members of the CNDH and fears that the security of these persons and their families may be threatened in the event of reprisals. Amnesty International reminds the Togolese government that they must ensure that human rights defenders be allowed to carry out their work freely and without fear of intimidation or threats.

Upon the request of the Minister of Justice, the CNDH opened an investigation into the serious torture allegations concerning members of the National Intelligence Agency (*Agence nationale de renseignement*, ANR) who act under the authority of the Head of State. CNDH investigators questioned around twenty of the detainees as well as members of the ANR and concluded: *"Prisoners were subject to physical and moral violence of an inhuman and degrading nature."* The CNDH asked that the authors of these acts be punished in an exemplary manner and that the victims receive adequate reparation and also medical support.

The detainees who have alleged that they were tortured in detention were part of a group, mostly soldiers, arrested in April 2009 and accused of crimes against state security and of rebellion. Two of President Faure Gnassingbé's half brothers, including Kpatcha Gnassingbé former Minister of Defence, were amongst those arrested. These persons were tried in September 2011 and several of them were given long prison sentences on the basis of "confessions" extracted under torture.

This use of torture was publicly denounced by Amnesty International in September 2011, who also asked that an independent and impartial investigation be opened. Several days later, the Togolese Minister of Justice entrusted the CNDH with this investigation whilst confirming that the authorities wanted to shed light on these events.

Although the CNDH was allowed to run its investigation freely, the decision of the authorities to censor the irrefutable conclusions of its report clearly shows that the government's commitment to combat torture and impunity is an empty promise.