

AI INDEX: AFR 57/34/99

EMBARGOED UNTIL 1 SEPTEMBER 1999, 16:30 GMT

## **Togo: Francophonie should reaffirm its commitments to human rights**

With the opening of the Francophonie Summit in Moncton, Canada, only a few days away, Amnesty International is urging the members states to ensure that human rights protection and an end to impunity in Togo is their number one priority.

"The Francophonie, which played a key role in the agreement reached in July 1998 between the Togolese government and opposition parties, failed the Togolese people by not emphasizing the protection of human rights in that agreement," Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International is calling on the member states of the Francophonie -- the meeting of French-speaking governments -- to reiterate their commitment to the protection of human rights in Togo and to ensure that perpetrators of human rights abuses are brought to justice.

"The culture of impunity that is prevalent in Togo must be lifted immediately," Amnesty International added. "The Francophonie should take this opportunity to press the Togolese authorities into taking concrete measures to prevent any further human rights violations."

On 20 August the United Nations (UN) Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities agreed to set up an international commission of inquiry into extrajudicial executions which Amnesty International and other human rights organizations have said took place during the Togolese presidential elections in June 1998.

Amnesty International welcomes the commission of inquiry but urges the UN and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to take all necessary steps to ensure the investigation is credible.

The human rights organization fears that complainants, witnesses and human rights defenders who give evidence to the commission face the risk of reprisals by the Togolese authorities.

Since the publication on 5 May 1999 of Amnesty International's latest report on Togo, (*Togo: Rule of Terror*), human rights defenders in the country have continued to be the target of detention and arbitrary arrest by the Togolese authorities. At least one human rights defender was tortured while in custody. Some have been forced into hiding, while others have fled the country with their families.

Pierre Sané, Secretary General of Amnesty International has even received a summons to appear before an investigating magistrate of the *Tribunal de Grande Instance* of Lomé on 15 November for "a possible indictment for contempt, incitement to revolt, dissemination of false news and conspiracy against the external security of the State".

Amnesty International is concerned that the Togolese authorities will use this criminal investigation against Pierre Sané to block access by the commission of inquiry to information and witnesses on the basis that the case is *sub judice*, that is, before the courts.

The human rights organization is calling on the representatives of the Francophonie throughout the world to ensure that human rights defenders in Togo are able to work without fear of arrest or intimidation by the Togolese authorities.

"Only by reaffirming its commitments to the ideals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will the Francophonie affirm its positive leadership role of the French-speaking world," Amnesty International concluded.

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