

## **The consultations between the European Union and Togo must lead to concrete measures in order to put an end to human rights violations**

On the eve of the opening of consultations between the European Union and Togo in view of a possible resumption of economic aid suspended since 1993, members of the "Togo Coalition"(1) insist that the human rights situation be examined as a whole, in accordance with article 96 of the Cotonou agreement.

The Coalition recalls that in March 2004 it published a document entitled "*A coalition of NGOs' concerns about human rights in Togo*"(2) which notably reported cases of summary executions, and many cases of torture and generalized impunity. The report also highlights serious violations of freedom of expression, information and opinion as well as systematic threats and harassment directed towards human rights defenders by the national authorities. These human rights defenders were considered with disdain as "*people consumed by great ambition*" who regard themselves as persecuted by the regime "*whereas they are just driven by the concern for propping up their applications for the status of political exiles*"(3).

Given this state of affairs, the Coalition urges the European Union, through these consultations, to demand of the Togolese authorities, firm and measurable commitments regarding the improvement of the human rights situation and the respect of democratic principles. In this respect, the Coalition had recommended in its document:

- revising the press code,
- incorporating the incrimination of torture in the Togolese penal code in line with international standards,
- opening systematic and independent enquiries into all allegations of torture,
- releasing those who are imprisoned for their convictions, and ending prolonged detention without judgment,
- implementing the 1998 United Nations Declaration on defenders,
- abolishing the death penalty,
- sending regular reports to the regional and international human rights protection organisations.

The Coalition hopes that the European Union's decision to partially or totally resume cooperation with Togo or, on the contrary, to renew its suspension, will be founded on a full examination of the human rights situation in Togo and on obtaining firm guarantees from the authorities concerning its improvement. The coalition hopes that this decision will not be merely based on statements of intent, which until now have never been consolidated by any concrete measures.

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(1) Action des chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture (ACAT-France), Agir Ensemble pour les Droits de l'Homme, Amnesty International, Fédération Internationale de l'Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture (FIACAT), Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH), Franciscans International, Organisation Mondiale contre la Torture (OMCT), Secours Catholique-Caritas France, Survie.

(2) See respective sites of the Coalition's members

(3) Togolese Government's observations after interventions of the Coalition's NGOs, during the 60th session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, Lome, March 30th, 2004