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HUMAN RIGHTS IN TOGO

ISSUE

The human rights situation in Togo continues to be a concern to the Canadian government and to the international community.

BACKGROUND

The Togo National Assembly approved a general amnesty on December 15, 1994, which in principle enables exiled Togolese to return home. The amnesty was signed between the Government of Togo and the UNHCR. Canada recognizes that members of the security forces have gone unpunished following the events of 1993.

The Action Committee for Renewal (CAR), the main opposition party, ended its boycott in August 1995 when a national electoral commission met its demands in respect to the balance of power.

The mysterious disappearance of the former Foreign Affairs head of human resources, along with the discovery of the charred remains of seven people in Northern Lomé in September 1994, continues to cast suspicion on the authorities. No investigation or arrests occurred after these events.

The border with Ghana was reopened in December 1994 after an eleven-month closure. However, the tension between the two neighbours remains. Foreigners are subject to frequent checks by the authorities.

Fines and even imprisonment have been the reward of certain journalists who have spoken out too strongly against President Eyadema. Freedom of the press is not assured. Illiteracy, combined with the population being accustomed to the exercise of centralized and abusive power, contribute considerably to misinforming the public regarding their fundamental rights.

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada takes every opportunity to express its concerns over Togo's human rights shortcomings and to insist on improvement. As in the past, Canadian representatives raised the question of human rights often in 1995. In particular, we discussed the difficulties encountered by refugees attempting to enter Togo when returning from exile in the region.

On the initiative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, an international Francophone symposium was held from September 19 to 22, 1995, in Ottawa under the heading, "Conflict Prevention: an African Perspective." Togo was represented by Mr. Hyacinthe Ajavon, diplomatic advisor to Prime Minister Edem Kodjo. The Assistant Deputy Minister for Africa took advantage of the opportunity to discuss the situation in Togo with Mr. Ajavon.

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