

THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN TOGO

ISSUE

The legislative elections held in two rounds in January and February 1994 — the first such elections since the 1960s — led to the formation of a government of "cohabitation" between President Eyadéma and opposition politician Edem Kodjo. Killings and other abuses of human rights by the security forces marred the legislative elections, and the arbitrary arrest of a journalist occurred in April. The year ended on a more hopeful note, however, with the President's announcement of new initiatives to improve national reconciliation and the reopening of the frontier with Ghana.

BACKGROUND

The legislative elections which began the year were marred by violence and intimidation, including the assassination of an opposition deputy elected in the first round. The opposition parties, the *Comité d'Action pour le Renouveau (CAR)* and the *Union Togolaise pour la Démocratie (UTD)* won 34 and 6 seats respectively, against 38 for President Eyadéma's *Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais (RPT)*. The opposition leaders could not agree to form a coalition and this left the initiative with the President. In preference to CAR leader Yawovi Agboyibo, Eyadéma chose UTD leader Edem Kodjo to form a government of "cohabitation" of the UTD and RPT. A former OAU Secretary General and opposition candidate in the 1993 presidential election, Kodjo was confirmed as Prime Minister by the National Assembly on 24 June 1994. The RPT, however, holds the majority of cabinet posts, given the parliamentary arithmetic.

Kodjo himself favours, and is well aware of international pressure for, improved respect for human rights. He spoke out on 25 April on the importance of the rule of law, respect for human rights and reconciliation between the people and the security forces. The government nominated Mr. Aboudou Assouma, President of the National Commission on Human Rights, for election to the UN Human Rights Committee. However, the Prime Minister does not appear strongly positioned to take action against the security forces who share tribal kinship with, and are loyal to, the President.

Specific examples this year of human rights abuses include:

- a. the deaths of 48 persons, "executed" by the security forces following an attack on the main army barracks in Lomé on 5 January, said by the government to have been organized with Ghanaian connivance;
- b. the arrest on 11 January of trade unionist Komi Dackey, suspected of participating in the attack on the barracks, and his continuing detention without trial;
- c. the assassination of deputy Gaston Edeh and two political party colleagues in February;