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Togo

A wave of bloody repression hit the demonstrations in Togo

- IV Online magazine - 2025 - IVP606 - July 2025 -

Publication date: Saturday 12 July 2025

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A wave of bloody repression hit the demonstrations on 26, 27 and 28 June. It was sparked by the arrest of a young rapper who was critical of the regime. Faced with a dynastic government locked in by the army, Togo's young people are expressing a desire for change that the regime is trying to extinguish with terror.

As usual, the Togolese government responded with extreme violence to the demonstrations that took place on 26, 27 and 28 June. The first demonstrations took place when the authorities arrested Aamron, a young rapper who had ironically called on the population to give a special present for the birthday of Faure Gnassingbé, who has been in power since 2005, succeeding his father, who himself remained in power for 38 years.

Locked dynastic power

Transferred to a psychiatric hospital, Aamron apologised to the President, explaining that he had regained his psychological equilibrium. Many people were outraged by this sordid spectacle, especially as his mother had testified during his visit that her son had been beaten up. Spontaneous demonstrations broke out, particularly in the capital, Lomé, followed by numerous arrests by the police.

He was not the first artist to be imprisoned. Poet Honoré Sitsopé Sokpor, alias 'Affectio', found himself behind bars for a poem published on Facebook advocating resistance. On social networks, bloggers and artists, mostly from the diaspora, had called for demonstrations against the dictatorship.

After four terms as president, following electoral shenanigans, Gnassingbé has made a constitutional change. From now on, he becomes President of the Council of Ministers, elected by the National Assembly, without any term limit. While the office of President of the Republic is maintained, it is now merely a ceremonial one.

In this way, Gnassingbé will be able to stay in power for ever, exempting himself from the presidential election that crystallises political life in the country. His longevity is ensured by his grip on the army. The dictator comes from the Kabye community, which accounts for just over 10% of the population, but makes up 70% of the Togolese army.

Breaking the revolt in blood

The toll from the three days of demonstrations was heavy: seven dead, dozens injured and around sixty arrested. Bodies were fished out of Lake Akodesséwa and the Bè lagoon.

Numerous eyewitness accounts indicate that the security forces entered homes, firing tear gas, beating up residents and kidnapping some of them. Armed civilians, wearing balaclavas and driving new, unregistered pick-ups, acted alongside the security forces.

As justification, the authorities served up nonsense. The government was simply defending the rule of law; the dead found in the lagoon and lake were simply drowned; and the armed civilians in the 4 x 4s were simply citizens

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organised in self-defence groups to protect their property.

Gnassingbé's aim is to strike violently in order to create a climate of terror and nip in the bud any mobilisations that are fuelled by a desire for change.

This in no way prevents the French embassy in Togo from providing the police with equipment, including portable radios and 500 Serflex handcuffs.

10 July 2025

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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