

Media Foundation for West Africa

TOGO WATCH

Freedom Of Expression Situational Report

MAY 2026

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN MAY 2026



This is a brief report highlighting notable freedom of expression developments (positive and negative) in Togo. It covers the month of May 2026. The report ends with a call to Togolese authorities to create a more enabling environment in the country.

In May 2026, two major developments were recorded. One was the release of the Reporters Without Borders' (RSF) World Press Freedom Index for 2026. The Index was discussed extensively, particularly in the context of the World Press Freedom Day, celebrated on May 3, 2026. The Index and its rankings were particularly significant for the people of Togo because whereas a number of West African countries recorded a decline in the overall press freedom situation in their countries, Togo, along with a few others, recorded an improvement. Togo was ranked 97th.

This was a notable progress because in the two preceding years, the country's performance on the global Index had showed a decline in its performance in press freedom issues. Specifically, Togo ranked 113th in 2024 and 121st in 2025. Thus, the 97th position (24 percentage points improvement) was deemed remarkable.



The other freedom of expression issue documented concerned the poet and activist, Honoré Sitsope Sokpor, who was arrested on April 24, 2026 for taking pictures of newly constructed drainage canals the Agoè-Nyivé neighborhood. On May 4, 2026, Sokpor was brought before an investigating judge in Lomé. He was charged with "threatening state security" and "disclosure of state property." He was placed in pretrial detention pending further proceedings. Meanwhile, before appearing before the investigating judge, Sokpor had spent 10 days in police custody.

MFWA'S POSITION AND CALL TO ACTION

Togo's ranking in the 2026 World Press Freedom Index is a welcome development, especially considering the fact that the country's ranking improved by 24 percentage points over the preceding year's ranking. The MFWA calls on the Togolese authorities to further improve the country's ranking and overall international image by upholding and protecting the right to expression.

In particular, we urge the authorities to end the seeming harassment and continous detention of Honoré Sitsope Sokpor and release him unconditionally and drop all charges held against him. The country should also release dissenting voices in detention, reinstate suspended media outlets and create a more enabling environment for expression. Such intentional measures will contribute to improving the country's international ratings further.

MFWA'S INTERVENTION IN TOGO

The above situational report is part of an intervention by the MFWA to contribute to creating an enabling environment for expression and participation in governance processes in Togo, and across West Africa at large. The monitoring and reporting of freedom of expression situation in Togo falls under an MFWA project titled, **Promoting Press Freedom and Women's Digital Rights in Togo.** The 12-month project is made possible with funding support from the Dutch Foreign Ministry through the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Ghana.



The project seeks to contribute to improving the freedom of expression (offline and online) environment in the country, strengthening the capacity of the media and improving the safety of journalists' conditions in the country to ensure that the media are able to play their watchdog role and serve as agents for improving the rule of law in Togo. The project is also targeted at empowering female journalists, activists and civil society actors on how to optimise online platforms for participation in public discourses and governance processes while staying safe.

As part of the project, the MFWA monitors and produces monthly reports on the press freedom, freedom of expression (including expression through protests), and safety of journalists' conditions in the country. The monthly reports serve as awareness creation and advocacy materials for drawing attention to the situation in the country, demanding redress, and advocating for policy and regulatory reforms.