

Media Foundation for West Africa

TOGO WATCH

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION SITUATIONAL REPORT

APRIL 2026

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN APRIL 2026



Honoré Sitsopé Sokpor, *Poet and Activist*

The freedom of expression landscape in Togo did not change much in the month of April 2026 compared to the preceding months in the year. One incident of arrest and detention was recorded during the month. The details of the incident and the implication(s) to the freedom of expression environment in the country are presented below.

On April 24, 2026, Honoré Sitsope Sokpor, also known as Affectio, was arrested while taking photographs of newly built drainage canals near his parents' home in the Agoè-Nyivé area of Lomé. His arrest, however, came to light five days after the incident when social media activist Grace Koumayi posted a video about it on TikTok.

According to relatives, Sokpor was taking the photographs because he wanted to highlight the importance of the drainage canals in preventing recurrent flooding in the capital. Sources indicate that people at the construction site reportedly warned him as he was taking the pictures, but that did not stop him, until they got the police involved.

Later, officers of the anti-gang Unit stopped Sokpor and reportedly made him delete the photos he had taken. Even after the deletion of the photos, Affectio was taken to the quarters of the Agoè-Nyivé police station for questioning. He was reportedly violently assaulted during the arrest, with officers confiscating his belongings.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN APRIL 2026



Jean-Pierre Fabre, *President of the political party l'Alliance Nationale pour le Changement (ANC)*

Six days after his arrest, (April 30, 2026) the Alliance Nationale pour le Changement (ANC) political party stated that police had expanded investigations of the case after examining Sokpor's phone, which was claimed to have contained additional images beyond the drainage site. Authorities suspect that Affectio shared the images with a group of Togolese activists in the diaspora who had previously been accused by the government of involvement in the mobilization of the deadly June 2025 protests.

As of April 30, 2026, Sokpor remains in custody, awaiting positive development regarding his case. He has already spent six days in custody in violations with Togo's Code of Criminal Procedure which limits police custody to 48 hours, renewable once.

The circumstances surrounding Sokpor's arrest are particularly concerning given his previous ordeal with the authorities over his online activities. His latest detention therefore marks a renewed restriction on his freedom, coming only a few months after his release from prolonged pre-trial detention in a separate case involving a poem he had published on social media.

This happened back in January 2025, when Affectio was jailed over a Facebook poem. Authorities alleged the poem threatened state security. He spent nearly eleven months in pretrial detention before being released in January 2026 through a presidential pardon granted in December 2025.

MFWA'S CALL TO THE TOGOLESE AUTHORITIES

Although the investigations about the case have not been concluded, the reason cited for Sokpor's arrest, allegations about how he was handled during his arrested, the arrest and the detention for six days without official communication, and his previous detention for over 10 months indirectly sends a signal to civic actors to be measured of their civic activities. Thus, this incident may indirectly push others into self-censorship.

The Media Foundation for West Africa regrets the reportedly violent arrest of Sokpor and the circumstances surrounding his obscure detention until activist Grace Koumayi made it public. The organisation is also concerned that for taking pictures from a construction site, a citizen will be assaulted and arbitrarily detained.

We, therefore, call for the immediate release of Honoré Sitsope Sokpor as his continued detention is in violation of the provisions under the Code of Criminal Procedure.
Also, we call on Togolese security agencies to investigate the alleged violent assault on Sokpor and further call on the security agencies to exercise restraint, due diligence and uphold all applicable rights of citizens during arrests and detention.

MEDIA FOUNDATION FOR WEST AFRICA'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.