


# TOGO WATCH

## Freedom of Expression Situational Report

JUNE 2026

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## KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN JUNE 2026

Togo's freedom of expression landscape did not record any incident of freedom of expression violation in June 2026. However, June 30 marked exactly six months since comedian and social media influencer, Akpaou Gros, also known as "Tayo" was arrested. Following his arrest, Akpaou was charged with "disturbing public order" and "criminal conspiracy." After appearing before an investigating judge, he was placed in a pre-trial detention at Kara Civil Prison and has been at the facility since. Akpaou was arrested at his home on December 30, 2025 for allegedly criticising the government.



Paradoxically, the comedian was arrested the same day the Council of Ministers announced a presidential clemency for 1,511 people, including some known dissidents. Akpaou's arrest is believed to be linked to the content of his TikTok videos which often speak out against social injustices, poor governance, and the actions of the country's authorities.

According to sources, six months on, Akpaou has not yet been able to secure legal representation. This situation is reportedly linked, in particular, to the limited availability of legal counsel in the Kara region. In such circumstances, detainees are generally compelled to seek the services of lawyers based in Lomé, who must then travel to the location where the legal proceedings are taking place. However, this arrangement requires significant financial resources, particularly to cover travel and legal representation costs, which can constitute an additional obstacle for detainees.

## MFWA'S POSITION AND CALL TO ACTION

The Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) is concerned about the prolonged pre-trial detention of Akpaou, coupled with the reported difficulties in accessing legal representation. The MFWA, therefore, calls on Togolese authorities to release Akpaou with immediate effect. Pre-trail detention must not be seen to be weaponised as a punishment even before a determination is made of a case by the courts. The organisation also calls on the authorities in Togo to ensure that Akpaou gets access to legal counsel.

## MFWA'S INTERVENTION IN TOGO

The brief report above on the freedom of expression situation in Togo during the month of June 2026 is part of the project, **Promoting Press Freedom and Women's Digital Rights in Togo,** which is being implemented with funding support from the Dutch Foreign Ministry through the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Ghana. The 12-month 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. Ultimately, it is aimed at ensuring 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 targetted 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.