Media Foundation for West Africa

TOGO WATCH

Freedom Of Expression Situational Report



JULY 2026

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KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN JULY 2026

This is a brief report about the freedom of expression landscape in Togo. It covers the developments (positive and negative) observed and documented in July 2026. Whereas monitoring of the freedom of expression landscape in the country for the said month did not record any breach to the right to expression, there was a major development in the case of Marguerite Essisonma Gnakadé, former minister of Defence.



Marguerite Essisonma Gnakadé,
Former Minister of Defence

After 10 months of being under house arrest, Gnakadé started a hunger strike on July 27, 2026 to denounce her prolonged arbitrary detention and the conditions of her detention. She was arrested on September 17, 2025, and reportedly appeared before the public prosecutor on September 22, 2026. Her arrest was alleged to be in connection with her activism for better leadership in the country and against certain government decisions, including Togo's 2024 constitutional reform. Charged with "inciting revolt against state authority," "disseminating false information," "disturbing public order," and "obstructing the proper functioning of the justice system," Gnakadé has been under house arrest at an undisclosed location since September 2025. She is reportedly embarking on the hunger strike in protest to the strict and inhumane detention conditions; heavy military surveillance; and denial of essential items.

July 2026 also marked three months of the pre-trial detention of the Togolese poet and activist Honoré Sitsopé Sokpor, also known as "Affectio." Sokpor was arrested on April 24, 2026 and charged with "undermining state security" and "disclosure of state property." He has been held in pre-trial detention since his appearance before the investigating judge on May 4, 2026.

The cases of Gnakadé and Sokpor aligns with that of Akpaou Gros which was highlighted in the June 2026 situational report on Togo. As of June, the comedian and social media influencer, Akpaou Gros, had spent six months in pre-trial detention. With his continuous detention as of July 2026, Gros has now been in pre-trial detention for seven months. Gros was arrested on December 30, 2025 for allegedly criticising the government. He was later charged with "disturbing public order" and "criminal conspiracy."

MFWA'S POSITION AND CALL TO ACTION

The Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) is deeply concerned about the prolonged pre-trial detention the three, Gnakadé, Sokpor and Gros, are being subjected to. The MFWA, therefore, calls on Togolese authorities to release the three unconditionally while expediting actions for the hearing of their respective cases. The organisation reiterates its position that pre-trial detention must not be weaponised as a punishment even before a determination is made of a case by the courts. The three must be released while the trial is ongoing. Also, we call for an independent investigation into the detention conditions of Gnakadé and a thorough medical check to safeguard her health even as she undergoes her hunger strike.

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.