

Police target journalists during protest

At least four journalists were reported injured by police while covering an anti-government protest in Togo's capital, Lomé, last Thursday, according to news reports.

Several of the journalists, along with local press freedom group, SOS Journalistes en Danger, said police had targeted a group of reporters with tear gas and rubber bullets in an effort to prevent them from covering the demonstrations, the reports said.

Several opposition and civil society organisations have staged protests over recent months, demanding government reforms before parliamentary elections scheduled for March, according to news reports. The organisations are also seeking the departure of the ruling party, which has led the country for more than four decades, news reports said.

"We are troubled by reports that Togolese police officers may have deliberately targeted journalists reporting on a public protest," said CPJ deputy director, Robert Mahoney from New York. "We call on Togolese authorities to investigate the accusations and bring any offending officers to account. It is important that the press be allowed to report freely in the run-up to the elections to ensure that voters are fully informed."

Noel Kokou Tadeignon, a freelance journalist for Reuters TV, the London-based pan-African satellite broadcaster Vox Africa, and the German government-funded broadcaster Deutsche Welle, said police directly targeted him in a group of about 15 other journalists who were covering the protests. "We had our 'Press' vests on. I was targeted by the police, who fired on me twice" with tear gas, Tadeignon said. He said he sustained injuries to his right arm and wrist.

Marcelin Adangnon, a reporter with local radio station, Légende FM, told CPJ his left arm was struck by a rubber bullet when police targeted the group. Jean-Claude Abalo, a correspondent for the Paris-based news magazine Jeune Afrique, fell and dislocated his hand as he and the other journalists fled from the attack, Tadeignon told CPJ.

Police also beat Pedro Amouzou, editor of local weekly *Crocodile News* and JED adviser, at the demonstration and briefly took him in to custody, news reports said.

Col. Yark Damehane, Togo's minister of security and civil protection, denied the deliberate targeting of journalists. He said he was aware that Tadeignon had been hit by a tear gas canister, because the journalist had called him, but denied the journalist's accusation that he had been shot by police.

Tadeignon has been targeted before. In April, police attacked Tadeignon and confiscated his camera while the journalist was covering protests on Togo's 52nd Independence Day, but later returned his equipment. The journalist also told CPJ that Tony Sodji, a reporter for local station TV7, was hit in the face with a stone by protesters at the demonstration.

Source: [allAfrica](#)

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