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Presidential election in Togo: The European Union has been the witness of the election riggings and extortion of the Togo dictatorship

Five years after the electoral and military coup in Togo, for which crimes still remain unpunished, the European Union is now locked into involvement because of its engagements as the principal observer of the full presidential electoral process, which was intended to help the country emerge from crisis. The Association Survie would like to request the European Union to now take responsibility in dealing with the fraudulent vote and the violent tendency of the regime.

The first conclusions of the preliminary report of the 130 observers of the European Union delegation (published the sixth of March) are already unflattering. The established irregularities listed in the organisation and taking place during the vote would justify invalidating it. Among others, following injustices have been noticed:

- An inflation of the electoral files and the registration of individuals under the age of 18 in the regions where Faure Gnassingbé, the elected president, has a high level of popularity,
- Purchasing of votes, and rice distributions by Faure Gnassingbé's activists at prices well below the market prices,
- Inequality of the candidates' treatment in the state media,
- Dispensations and proxy voting without controls, permitting one to vote several times,
- A lack of certification modalities for the voting papers at voting time,
- Technical problems occurring in the centralisation of the results, which is the cornerstone of all election riggings.

The irregularities have led two parties to submit appeals to the Constitutional Court in charge of the validation of the election, even though there are few guarantees of the decisions' credibility of this Court, that has very close links to the regime. On the 6th of March, the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) published the provisional results announcing the outgoing president Faure Gnassingbé as the winner with 60,92% of votes at the presidential polls organised the 4th of March.

The leading candidate of the opposition, Jean-Pierre Fabre, who is asserting the victory for his party, the FRAC (The Republican Front for Alternation and Change), did not issue a recourse because he considered the Constitutional Court to be biased. **The European delegation is now finding itself as the principal witness of this unequal power struggle, which involves it in the legitimization of Eyadema's dictatorship regime.**

Faure Gnassingbé is suspicious because his absence. At the same time, this political and constitutional crisis gives the opportunity to the army to reappear as a leading protagonist. **The Security Presidential Election 2010 Force (FOSEP) is participating in the repression of the FRAC's active members contesting the results in Lomé.** Run by the Gendarmerie lieutenant-colonel Yark Damehane (incriminated of torture in 2005 by the Worldwide Organization Against Torture), this force is financed by the European union (as part of the program "securing of the election process") implemented by French Development Agency (AFD). Arbitrary arrests, prohibition of demonstrations on opposition to the legal constitution, violation of free movements of the people (FRAC's general headquarters being surrounded), attempts against the UFC's headquarters (Union of Change Forces): the repression and intimidation acts are increasing.

Above all, a police intervention in the centre of information data processing of the FRAC leads to the seizure of the computer hardware that was used to recount the votes, and to the destruction of the charge sheets. This makes it impossible to verify the results.

The Association Survie is forwarding the concerns of Togo's civil society - in particular of the 17 organisations grouped together in the "Coordination mechanism of the civil society organisations activities" - concerning the repression acts observed, and **requests the European Union to approach Togolese authorities in order to make these human rights violations stop. These violations are aimed at reducing any form of contestation of the electoral process, which has been a disaster.** Survie is adding its voice to the claims formulated by Togo's civil society, which:

- **"requests the European Union, the principal financial donor of the country of Togo for the electoral process, to ensure that every step of the electoral process that it finances obeys the international norms and standards.**
- **exhorts the Union Nations system, the African Union, the CEDEAO and all the institutions involved in the process to help the different protagonists in the research of consensual and pacific solutions to the conflicts that have occurred in the present electoral process. »**

Five years after the succession took place with blood, the power struggle between Faure Gnassingbé and his challengers still continues and now involves the European institutions. **The European Union cannot accept that the law of the strongest is again the law for this election. The European Union can also not ignore the issue that this elections represents for a regime that employs tricks and fraudulent dealings and agreements with Françafrique: that is to say searching for international support and legitimization. This support would permit the regime to hide its dictatorial and unlawful nature and to normalize its diplomatic relationships with its partners.**

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