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**STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF TOGO
FOR THE 54TH SESSION OF THE
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

The European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) was founded in 1998 and is a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights around the world. The ECLJ also holds Special Consultative status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council. This report discusses the status of human rights in the Republic of Togo (Togo) for the 54th session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

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Background

1. Togo is a country located in western Africa and has a population of approximately 8.5 million people.¹ Approximately 33% of the population practices traditional beliefs, 27.8% of the population is Catholic, 13.7% Muslim, 9.9% other Christians, 9.5% Protestant, and 4.9% nonreligious.²

2. Togo's last review was held on January 24, 2022.³ As a result of the review, Togo received 224 recommendations, 182 of which it accepted.⁴ It was recommended by Brazil, and supported by Togo, that the government "[t]ake steps to ensure freedom of conscience, religion and association."⁵ It was also recommended by Lebanon, and supported by Togo, to "[p]ursue the efforts made and the awareness campaign aiming at the eradication of female genital mutilation."⁶ In our last report, we also expressed concern over the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM).

3. In its 2026 World Watch List, Open Doors ranked Togo as the 66th worst country for Christians.⁷ This ranking stems from the fact that Islamic militants are targeting Christians in northern Togo, and Christian converts face oppression within their communities and families.⁸ Additionally, the government has made it difficult for Christian denominations to register and build churches.

Legal Framework

Christian Persecution

4. Under Article 25 of the Constitution of Togo:

Every person has the right to the freedom of thought, of conscience, of religion, of belief, of opinion and of expression. The exercise of these rights and freedoms is made within respect for the freedoms of others, of the public order and of the norms established by the law and the regulations.

The organization and the practice of religious beliefs is exercised freely within respect for the law. It is the same for the philosophical orders.

The exercise of belief and of expression of belief is done within respect for the secularity of the State.

The religious denominations have the right to organize themselves and to exercise their activities freely within respect for the law.⁹

5. Additionally, Togo requires that most Christian denominations register with the government and pay a registration fee of 150,000 CFA francs.¹⁰ The government also requires churches to get approval to build or expand churches.¹¹

6. Togo is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).¹² Under Article 18 of the ICCPR:

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.¹³

Female Genital Mutilation

7. Article 13 of the Constitution of Togo states that:

The State has the obligation to guarantee the physical and mental integrity, the life and the security of every living person in the national territory.

No one may be arbitrarily deprived either of their liberty or of their life.¹⁴

8. Furthermore, under Article 21 of the Constitution, “[t]he human person is sacred and inviolable. No one may be submitted to torture or to other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatments.”¹⁵

9. Law No. 98-016 bans the practice of FGM and also requires individuals to report cases of FGM to the authorities.¹⁶

10. Togo is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).¹⁷ Under Article 19 of the CRC:

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.¹⁸

11. Further, under Article 7 of the ICCPR, “[n]o one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In particular, no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation.”¹⁹

Christian Persecution

12. There are several factors contributing to the persecution of Christians in Togo. These include targeting of Christians by Islamic militants, harassment and ostracization of Christian converts from relatives and community members, and government limitations on the registration and construction of churches.

13. Islamic extremists, intent on dominating the northern part of Togo, have been conducting attacks along Togo's border with Burkina Faso, which have resulted in Christians being killed and forced from their homes. In 2025 alone, Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM), a militant group with connections to Al Qaeda, was responsible for fifteen attacks in Togo that resulted in the deaths of fifty-four people.²⁰

14. These attacks on Christians by Islamic militants have destroyed lives and created a humanitarian problem, as many Christians are forced to flee their homes in search of safety.²¹ In 2025, approximately 240 Christians were forced from their homes as Islamic militants entered Togo from Burkina Faso.²² The militants have burned homes, clothes, Bibles, and have stolen livestock.²³ For example, on February 7, 2025, Islamic militants broke into the home of a Christian pastor and shot and stabbed him to death.²⁴

15. Additionally, on October 26, 2024, Islamic militants attacked a church located in northern Togo.²⁵ During the attack, the militants burned down homes, attacked a church, and killed eight men.²⁶

16. Further, in April 2024, Islamic militants attacked a village and killed five people.²⁷

17. To address the growing threat of Islamic militants in northern Togo, the National Assembly of Togo declared a state of security emergency in 2022 and has extended it every year since.²⁸ The purpose of this is to allow the government to respond to the threat and protect people and their property, maintain public order, and safeguard Togo's territorial integrity.²⁹ Despite these efforts, Islamic militants have been increasing the number of attacks.

18. From 2023 to 2024, as a result of attacks by Islamic militants in Togo, the number of fatalities increased by 45%.³⁰ Additionally, in just the first six months of 2025, Islamic militants carried out fifteen attacks and killed fifty-four civilians, with attacks in May and June being among the deadliest in the region's recent history.³¹

19. In addition to the direct attacks on Christians by terrorists, Christians, specifically converts, are regularly harassed and oppressed by members of their community and their own families. Christian converts are forced to participate in ceremonies that contradict their faith. They are also ostracized by their family members for converting to Christianity.

20. In some regions throughout Togo, Christians are oppressed by adherents of traditional African belief systems and are forced to participate in ceremonies that contradict their Christian faith.³² Further, Christian converts have been forced from their homes, leading to hardships and feeling of isolation.³³

21. Men who convert to Christianity are physically abused, harassed, and their families are taken away from them.³⁴ As one local reported, "Christian converts who are men report that

once their families find out about their new faith, their wives and children are taken from them[.]”³⁵

22. Women who convert to Christianity are at risk of being forced into marriage to prevent them from leaving the religion of their family.³⁶ This is much more prevalent in Togo’s northern regions, where there is less tolerance for individuals converting to Christianity.³⁷ One individual in northern Togo stated that “[m]any women are expelled from their homes because of their conversions in the north and far north. In some cases, after several months or years they have the opportunity to see their children again but rarely to return to their homes.”³⁸

23. The right for Christians to freely practice their faith is also restricted by the government. As mentioned above, the government requires Christian groups to register.³⁹ While registration requirements are not inherently detrimental, Togo has exploited this policy to suppress minority religions.⁴⁰ The government has not acted on any pending registration requests over the past decade and has refused to accept new applications since 2013.⁴¹ The Togo government has placed a curfew on religious activities, including funeral prayers, and night vigils, being subject to an 8:00 PM curfew enforced by the Ministry of Territorial Administration.⁴² Religious groups are limited to specific days of worship: Sunday for Christians, Friday for Muslims, and Saturday for Seventh-day Adventists.⁴³

24. Further, churches that are registered still face difficulties and are heavily regulated.⁴⁴ For example, they face obstacles when trying to expand or refurbish existing churches.⁴⁵ In regions dominated by Muslims, locals often contest the budding and expanding of Christian churches, which reflects tensions in the community.⁴⁶

Female Genital Mutilation

25. In Togo, while the national prevalence of FGM is relatively low, regionally the picture is much different. Approximately 3.1% of girls between the ages of fifteen and forty-nine undergo FGM.⁴⁷ However, in certain regions, like Centrale, the prevalence is as high as 13.5%.⁴⁸ This is because enforcement is weak, with few documented prosecutions.⁴⁹ Further, in this region, there is cultural pressure to perform FGM.⁵⁰

26. Togo has undertaken efforts to combat the practice of FGM through banning the practice and conducting awareness campaigns. Nationally, this has been successful in reducing the rates of FGM. FGM is most commonly performed on girls between the ages of four and fourteen.⁵¹ In 1987, approximately 8% of girls between the ages of fifteen and nineteen were affected, compared to just 1.4% in 2017.⁵²

27. However, work still needs to be done to combat FGM in regions where rates are still relatively high. While the government has conducted awareness campaigns, there is no coordinated national strategy to combat FGM, especially in the regions where the practice is more common.⁵³ Additionally, while the practice is illegal, enforcement of the law is very weak, and there have been very few prosecutions.⁵⁴ Further, there are instances where families take their daughters across the border to Ghana to undergo the procedure.⁵⁵ This is because, in Ghana, laws against FGM are weaker.⁵⁶

28. The practice of FGM is extremely dangerous and often involves traditional practitioners using nonsterile tools.⁵⁷ FGM offers no health benefits and harms girls in numerous ways, both in the short term and the long term.⁵⁸ Girls who have undergone FGM have experienced

numerous side effects impacting both their physical and psychological well-being.⁵⁹ These side effects can range from infections, excessive bleeding, urinary problems, to chronic genital infections and can lead to complications in childbirth, among many others.⁶⁰

29. As we noted in our last report, while nationwide rates of FGM are low, we are concerned about the high rates in certain regions of the country. In its last review, Togo supported a recommendation from Lebanon to “[p]ursue the efforts made and the awareness campaign aiming at the eradication of female genital mutilation.”⁶¹ More still needs to be done to educate the population in certain regions of the country about the dangers of FGM and the need for it to be stopped.

Recommendations

30. While Togo has taken action to combat Islamic militants in the north, attacks have only been increasing in recent years. We urge Togo to take all necessary steps to defeat these militants and put an end to the violence being carried out against Christians in northern Togo. It is imperative that Islamic militants are driven from the country before the situation gets worse and more people are killed. Further, we ask Togo work to provide aid and support for the Christians who have been forced from their homes, and work to ensure they are able to safely return home. Additionally, we ask the government to take action to work with Christian churches to ensure that they are able to register, build, and expand their churches.

31. We ask that Togo work to foster religious tolerance and ensure that no one is harassed or discriminated against because of their faith. Everyone should have the right to freely profess their faith.

32. While Togo has made efforts to combat FGM, there remain areas where rates are high. We urge Togo to work within these communities and educate the people on the dangers of FGM and enforce the law by prosecuting those who continue to carry out this harmful practice.

¹ Samuel Decalo et al., *Togo*, BRITANNICA (Mar. 25, 2026), <https://www.britannica.com/place/Togo>.

² *Id.*

³ *Universal Periodic Review - Togo*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/tg-index> (last visited Apr. 24, 2026).

⁴ *Togo – Infographic*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/upr/sessions/session40/tg/2022-12-23/Togo.pdf> (last visited Apr. 24, 2026).

⁵ *UPR of Togo (3rd Cycle – 40th Session), Thematic List of Recommendations*, OHCHR 42, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/upr/sessions/session40/tg/2022-09-29/UPR40_Togo_Thematic_List_of_Recommendations.doc (last visited Apr. 24, 2026).

⁶ *Id.* at 29.

⁷ *WWL 2026 Compilation of All Main Documents*, OPEN DOORS INT’L 25 (Jan. 2026), <https://www.opendoors.org/research-reports/wwl-documentation/WWL2026-Compilation-of-main-documents.pdf>.

⁸ *Togo: Persecution Dynamics*, OPEN DOORS INT’L 12, 14 (Feb. 2025), <https://www.opendoors.org/research-reports/country-dossiers/WWL-2025-Togo-Persecution-Dynamics>.

⁹ CONSTITUTION OF TOGO 1992, art. 25, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Togo_2007.

¹⁰ *Togo: Persecution Dynamics*, *supra* note 8, at 19.

¹¹ *Id.*

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- ¹³ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 18, *adopted* Dec. 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights> [hereinafter ICCPR].
- ¹⁴ CONSTITUTION OF TOGO 1992, art. 13, *supra* note 9.
- ¹⁵ *Id.* art. 21.
- ¹⁶ *Togo: The Law and FGM*, ORCHID PROJECT 3 (Sept. 2018), https://www.orchidproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/togo_law_report_v1_september_2018.pdf.
- ¹⁷ *Ratification Status for Togo*, OHCHR, *supra* note 12.
- ¹⁸ Convention on the Rights of the Child art. 19, Nov. 20, 1989, G.A. Res. 44/25.
- ¹⁹ ICCPR art. 7, *supra* note 13.
- ²⁰ *Finding Hope Despite Persecution in Togo*, OPEN DOORS (Sept. 3, 2025), <https://www.opendoors.ph/news/latest/2025-09-04-indian-believers-nervous-about-new-conversion-laws/>.
- ²¹ *Togo: Hundreds of Christians Displaced by Islamists*, THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS, S. AFR. (July 29, 2025), <https://www.persecutionsa.org/post/togo-hundreds-of-christians-displaced-by-islamists>.
- ²² *Id.*
- ²³ *Id.*
- ²⁴ *Togo Pastor Killed, Others Persecuted by Islamists*, CHRISTIANS IN CHAINS (Apr. 16, 2025), <https://www.christiansincrisis.net/all-latest-news-headlines/18491-togo-pastor-killed-others-persecuted-by-islamists.html>.
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- ²⁷ *Pastors Targeted by Islamists*, THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS (Apr. 3, 2025), <https://www.persecution.com/stories/pastors-targeted-by-islamists/#:~:text=Several%20pastors%20in%20the%20north,and%20learn%20how%20to%20pray>.
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- ²⁹ *Id.*
- ³⁰ *Militant Islamist Groups in Africa Sustain High Pace of Lethality*, AFR. CTR. FOR STRATEGIC STUDS. (Feb. 18, 2025), <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/mig2025-militant-islamist-groups-in-africa/#:~:text=Nigerien%20military%20forces%20have%20regularly,from%2066%20to%2096%20deaths>.
- ³¹ Daphne Psadedakis, *Al Qaeda Affiliate Has Killed Dozens of Civilians in Togo This Year, Minister Says*, REUTERS, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/al-qaeda-affiliate-has-killed-dozens-civilians-togo-this-year-minister-says-2025-07-29/#:~:text=Thousands%20have%20been%20killed%20and,Burkina%20Faso%2C%20Mali%20and%20Niger.&text=Daphne%20Psadedakis%20is%20a%20foreign,of%20Arts%20in%20International%20Studies> (last updated July 29, 2025, 1:42 PM).
- ³² *Togo: Full Country Dossier* (Mar. 2024), OPEN DOORS INT’L 6, <https://www.opendoors.org/research-reports/country-dossiers/WWL-2024-Togo-Full-Country-Dossier.pdf>.
- ³³ *Id.* at 7.
- ³⁴ *Togo: Persecution Dynamics*, *supra* note 8, at 24.
- ³⁵ *Id.*
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- ³⁷ *Id.*
- ³⁸ *Id.*
- ³⁹ *Togo: Persecution Dynamics* 19 (Feb. 2025), *supra* note 8, at 19.
- ⁴⁰ *Id.*
- ⁴¹ *Id.*
- ⁴² *Togo 2023 International Religious Freedom Report*. EUROPEAN COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION NETWORK, (June 24, 2024), <https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2111973.html>.
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- ⁴⁴ *Togo: Persecution Dynamics* 19 (Feb. 2025), *supra* note 8, at 19.
- ⁴⁵ *Id.*
- ⁴⁶ *Id.*
- ⁴⁷ *Togo*, FGM/C RSCH. INITIATIVE, <https://www.fgmcri.org/country/togo/> (last visited Apr. 24, 2026).

⁴⁸ *Id.*

⁴⁹ Grace Victor, *My Opinion on Cross-Border FGM: Lessons for Togo*, HUMANIST MUT. AID NETWORK, <https://www.thehuman.team/my-opinion-on-crossborder-fgm-lessons-for-togo-copy> (last visited Apr. 24, 2026).

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ *Togo*, *supra* note 47.

⁵² *Id.*; *A Statistical Overview of Female Genital Mutilation in Togo*, UNICEF, https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/cp/fgm/FGM_TGO.pdf (last visited Apr. 24, 2026).

⁵³ *Overview of the Situation of Female Genital Mutilation in Togo*, RFLD, <https://rflgd.org/2022/01/01/etat-des-lieux-sur-la-situation-des-mutilations-genitales-feminines-au-togo/> (last visited Apr. 24, 2026).

⁵⁴ Victor, *supra* note 49.

⁵⁵ Evelyn Sakeah et al., *Persistent Female Genital Mutilation Despite its Illegality: Narratives from Women and Men in Northern Ghana*, NAT'L LIBR. OF MED. (Apr. 22, 2019), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6476474/>.

⁵⁶ *Id.*

⁵⁷ *A Statistical Overview of Female Genital Mutilation in Togo*, *supra* note 52; Victor, *supra* note 49.

⁵⁸ *Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research (SRH): Female Genital Mutilation*, WORLD HEALTH ORG., [https://www.who.int/teams/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-research-\(srh\)/areas-of-work/female-genital-mutilation](https://www.who.int/teams/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-research-(srh)/areas-of-work/female-genital-mutilation) (last visited Apr. 24, 2026).

⁵⁹ *Id.*

⁶⁰ *Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research (SRH): Health Risks of Female Genital Mutilation*, WORLD HEALTH ORG., [https://www.who.int/teams/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-research-\(srh\)/areas-of-work/female-genital-mutilation/health-risks-of-female-genital-mutilation](https://www.who.int/teams/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-research-(srh)/areas-of-work/female-genital-mutilation/health-risks-of-female-genital-mutilation) (last visited Apr. 24, 2026).

⁶¹ *UPR of Togo (3rd Cycle – 40th Session), Thematic List of Recommendations*, *supra* note 5, at 29.