



Amnesty International Report 2015/16 - Benin

Publisher [Amnesty International](#)

Publication Date 24 February 2016

Cite as Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Report 2015/16 - Benin*, 24 February 2016, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/56d05b7115.html> [accessed 8 May 2016]

Disclaimer This is not a UNHCR publication. UNHCR is not responsible for, nor does it necessarily endorse, its content. Any views expressed are solely those of the author or publisher and do not necessarily reflect those of UNHCR, the United Nations or its Member States.

Republic of Benin

Head of state: **Thomas Boni Yayi**

Head of government: **Lionel Zinsou**

There were rising tensions in the capital Cotonou and other towns ahead of legislative elections. The attempted arrest of a political opponent led to two days of protests and clashes between protesters and security forces in Cotonou. Freedom of expression remained under threat as protests were banned after elections; a journalist reported receiving threats. Prisons remained overcrowded.

BACKGROUND

Legislative elections were held in April, with the Cowry Forces for an Emerging Benin (FCBE), a coalition of 50 parties supporting President Boni Yayi, becoming the largest group in the National Assembly, with 33 out of 83 seats. The National Assembly elected political opponent Adrien Houngbédji as its president. Presidential elections were scheduled to take place in February 2016; President Boni Yayi pledged that he would not seek a third term.

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

In May, the Minister of the Interior banned all protests until the end of the electoral process. President Boni Yayi filed a complaint against opposition deputy Armand-Marie Candide Azannai for slander. An attempt to arrest him sparked clashes between protesters, the police and the army in Cotonou.

Demonstrators were dispersed using tear gas and about 10 people were injured. More than 20 people were arrested on charges of rebellion, vandalism and violence for their participation in the protests and riots between 4 and 6 May. Other demonstrations were also banned by police and gendarmerie in other cities, including Azovè, southwestern Benin.

In May, journalist Ozias Sounouvou reported receiving anonymous arrest threats after criticizing the President for hindering press freedom.

In June, 12 students at Abomey-Calavi University who were protesting against the elimination of exam resits were beaten and arrested by security forces, before being released a few days later. The protests were initially peaceful; some protesters burned tyres and set a firetruck alight following the use of excessive force by police.

In August, journalist Boris Tougan was arrested for compromising state security after he published an article asserting that the country's participation in the regional force fighting the armed group Boko Haram was solely intended to help President Boni Yayi stay in power. He was detained without charge for five days before being released unconditionally.

PRISON CONDITIONS

Prisons remained overcrowded. The Cotonou prison held 1,130 detainees despite a maximum capacity of 500, resulting in harsh conditions of detention. In May, all detention centres in the country failed to provide prisoners with food for three days, after the state failed to pay its contractors.

DEATH PENALTY

Despite the country's ratification in 2012 of the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, the government had yet to adopt laws removing the death penalty from its national legislation.

Copyright notice: © Copyright Amnesty International

Search Refworld

by keyword
and / or country

[Advanced Search](#) | [Search Tips](#)

Countries

- [Benin](#)

Topics

- [Death penalty](#)
- [Elections](#)
- [Freedom of assembly and association](#)
- [Freedom of expression](#)
- [Prison or detention conditions](#)
- [Protests / Demonstrations / Riots / Civil unrest](#)
- [Threats / Intimidation](#)