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Togo

A dynastic dictatorship in Togo

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Switching from a presidential to a parliamentary system is Faure Gnassingbé's latest brainwave to ensure that, like his father, he remains President for life.

The country woke up to a new Constitution passed on the night of 25 March by 89 of the 91 members of the Togolese National Assembly.

Not only was there no debate, even though this is a major change for the country, but this new Constitution, which is awaiting promulgation by the President of the Republic, has still not been published. According to the authorities, it will be published when it becomes effective.

The Constitution is changing...

What we do know is that this new text is based on a parliamentary system, since it is the majority party in the Assembly that will appoint the President of the Council of Ministers. This office will concentrate all the powers, in particular that of representing the country abroad and leading the army. It will not be subject to a term limit, unlike that of the President of the Republic, whose main task will be to inaugurate the chrysanthemums.

Faure Gnassingbé did not immediately promulgate this new Constitution, which was supposed to inaugurate Togo's 5th Republic. He is calling for a new reading in the National Assembly to incorporate improvements to the text from various sectors of society.

... but the régime remains in place

This is one way of responding to the outcry over both the form and the substance of this reform. Many people, not just in the opposition, pointed out that such a major change could not be made without an in-depth debate throughout the country. All the more so as the term of office of the MPs expires at the end of December 2023. What's more, the conditions under which they were elected were highly dubious, which was why the opposition boycotted the election at the time.

There is little doubt as to the purpose of this manoeuvre. Faure Gnassingbé's aim is to perpetuate his power. In 2005, he succeeded his father Eyadema, who ruled the country for 38 years. Since then, he has already amended the Constitution to allow him to run for a fourth term as President of the Republic, and from now on he will be able to remain in power as President of the Council of Ministers.

Human rights remain at half-mast

Of course, the caciques of power are trying to justify this reform. It would pave the way for more democracy. But at the same time, the press conference held by the opposition on this subject has been banned. As for the press, it is still in the hot seat. Apollinaire Mewenemesse, the 71-year-old editor of the newspaper *La Dépêche*, was recently

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imprisoned. Dozens of political prisoners have been languishing in jail for years without trial. It is perhaps no coincidence that the new Constitution has been stripped of a third of its articles relating mainly to human rights... relegated to the appendices.

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Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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