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Word of Togo Leader's Victory Ignites Clashes

By MICHAEL KAMBER
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LOMÉ, Togo, April 26 - Togo's electoral commission on Tuesday declared Faure Gnassingbé, the son of the longtime leader Gnassingbé Eyadéma, the winner in Sunday's presidential election. Within minutes of the announcement, police officers and opposition supporters were clashing on the streets, and the skies grew dark with smoke from burning barricades.

Clashes continued throughout the day, with the police firing tear gas and bullets at protesters who threw rocks, cut down trees to block thoroughfares and stockpiled Molotov cocktails. At least four people were reported wounded by gunfire, and many homes and stores were looted. By the end of the day, the country's borders remained closed and all phone service had been cut off.

Late Tuesday, Abram Morel, the medical coordinator for the Red Cross in Togo, said that more than 100 people had been wounded, overwhelmingly opposition supporters.

The director of the country's election commission, Kisseme Tchangai-Walla, said Mr. Gnassingbé had won with 60 percent of the vote, against 38 percent for Emmanuel Akitani-Bob, the candidate for a coalition of six opposition parties. Two minor party candidates received the remaining votes.

Mr. Gnassingbé was installed as president by the military immediately after his father's death, in February. But he was forced to step down and call elections after weeks of violent street demonstrations and international pressure led by other West African states.

The Economic Community of West African States had 150 election observers in Togo, and the organization issued a statement Tuesday saying they found the election credible despite "anomalies."

In one discrepancy, in the northern prefecture of Kozah, 218,786 people were shown to have voted for Mr. Gnassingbé. Government statistics show the entire population of Kozah as being 156,000.

In an effort to diffuse tensions, President Olusegun Obasanjo brokered a meeting on Monday in Abuja, Nigeria, between Togo's exiled opposition leader, Gilchrist Olympio, and Mr. Gnassingbé. Mr. Obasanjo announced Monday that an agreement had been reached to form a coalition government. But Mr. Olympio immediately disputed that claim, and it was not clear on Tuesday whether members of the opposition would join Mr. Gnassingbé's government.

At the opposition headquarters this morning, Jean-Pierre Fabre, vice president of the main opposition group, Union of Forces for Change, said, "Faure Gnassingbé can never win an

election in Togo. We are going to mobilize the population to resist. The army can shoot us, we do not mind." As he spoke, young men behind him set tires ablaze.

The Associated Press reported that the Chinese Embassy had been attacked and that looters had ransacked the homes of Lebanese residents, who own many of Lomé's businesses. By noon, many Lebanese had fled to hotels.

In Be, an opposition neighborhood in Lomé and the frequent site of clashes Tuesday, groups of young men feverishly dug ditches across roads and threw rocks and fired slingshots at soldiers.

One protester, Romain Kpotcheme, sat on a street corner with several friends making Molotov cocktails. Asked how long the opposition would protest the election results, he answered, "They stole our election. We will fight for weeks, even months, until they give us the right result."
