

Wednesday, 12 June 2013

## Another Togo footballer refuses to play in Libya



Togo players are refusing to play a World Cup qualifier in Libya after violence there led to dozens of deaths over the weekend and prompted FIFA to move Friday's game from Benghazi to the capital, Tripoli. Midfielder Alexis Romao of Marseille and striker Jonathan Ayite of Brest flew back to France from Togo this week citing security worries as their reason for not wanting to travel to Libya, and the Togolese players want the match moved out of Libya completely. On Saturday, 31 people were killed in protests against militia forces in Benghazi, where the Libya-Togo match was scheduled to be played. The deadly clashes came just a day after Libya drew 0-0 with Congo in World Cup qualifying, the first competitive match in the country since the uprising that overthrew Moammar Qaddafi. FIFA granted Libya permission to play games at home again in April. Togo football has been affected by recent tragedies; a helicopter crash at Sierra Leone's Lungi International Airport in 2007 in which sports officials, including the country's sports minister, died and an attack on the team bus in the Angolan enclave of Cabinda before the 2010 African Cup, when a member of the coaching staff and a team media official were killed. Despite security assurances from Libya and the moving of the game, Togo's players still do not want to play in the North African country. "After what we went through in Lungi and Cabinda, where some of us died and others [were] injured, you must understand that we are right to refuse to take any risk," Togo captain Serge Akakpo said on Tuesday. "We have friends in the Congolese team which played [in Libya] last week and what they told us does not assure us. We want the match to be played outside the country." Togo's match against Libya is crucial to the outcome of Group I in African qualifying. Libya leads the group on goal difference from Cameroon with two rounds of games to play. The winner of the group will qualify for one of Africa's 10 playoffs that will decide the five teams that qualify for the World Cup in Brazil. Togo is two points behind. Togo Football Federation official Yvette Klusseh told national television "we do understand the players" and said the federation had asked FIFA to move the game out of Libya.