

Angola

President José Eduardo dos Santos, in power for 35 years, has faced increasing criticism in Angola for rampant corruption, bad governance, and government repression. Although the 2012 elections ended in another victory for his ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the authorities intensified repressive measures, restricting freedom of expression, association, and assembly. In 2014, the government once again delayed long-overdue local elections.

The government continues targeting outspoken journalists and activists with criminal defamation lawsuits, arbitrary arrests, unfair trials, intimidation, harassment, and surveillance. The police use excessive force and engage in arbitrary arrests to stop peaceful anti-government protests and other gatherings. In 2014, authorities conducted the first post-colonial population and housing census, and in late 2013 launched a civil registration campaign that promotes free access to birth certificates and identity documents. However, the government also stepped up mass forced evictions in Luanda, the capital, and continued there and in other cities to violently remove street traders, including pregnant women and women with children. Outspoken human rights activists, journalists, human rights lawyers, and youth protest activists reported repeated harassment, intimidation, and pervasive surveillance by police and intelligence agents.

Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression is severely restricted in Angola due to censorship and self-censorship in state media and ruling party-controlled private media and other forms of government repression. In such a climate, Internet blogs and social media have become the main channels for open debate.

The government has regularly used criminal defamation laws and other abusive legal provisions to silence journalists.

In July, the prominent investigative journalist Rafael Marques was formally notified of criminal libel charges filed by seven high-ranking Angolan army generals and the diamond mining company Sociedade Mineira do Cuango. The plaintiffs are jointly demanding US\$1.2 million in damages from Marques. The lawsuits have been pending since 2013, and the legal time limit to present the formal charges expired in June. At time of writing he was awaiting trial. A further criminal lawsuit filed by another diamond company, ITM Mining, is pending. Marques had accused the plaintiffs of involvement in torture, rape, and killings in a book he published in Portugal in 2011. Angola's Attorney General's Office shelved a complaint filed by Marques against the generals and business associates in 2012, and has failed to investigate the allegations.

The same generals are also demanding \$376,000 in damages in a civil lawsuit against Marques and his editor in Portugal on the same matter. In February, Angola security agents harassed and threatened two Angolan defense witnesses, brought to a court hearing in Portugal by Marques, before their travel to Portugal and upon their return to Angola. A previous criminal lawsuit against Marques by the same plaintiffs in Portugal had been dismissed by the Portuguese prosecutor.

On February 2, police in the police headquarters of Cacuaco, Luanda, arrested Queirós Anastácio Chilúvia, editor of Rádio Despertar, which is owned by the opposition party, National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola (UNITA). He was there to seek an official explanation from the police after transmitting, live on Rádio Despertar, cries for help from jailed detainees. Chilúvia was held in custody for five days without charge. On February 7, a court sentenced him to 180 days in prison, suspended for two years, and a fine of \$600 on the charges of defamation and slander, disobedience against a corporate public authority, and "abuse of press freedom"—a vaguely defined crime under the 2006 Press Law.

On May 28, police briefly arrested Rádio Despertar journalist Adérito Pascual at a police station in Viana when he asked for an official statement for a live broadcast on a violent operation to remove street traders. Police seized his phone, recorder, and identification, and government agents forced him to delete videos he had taken. He was released after two hours and his equipment returned. In a similar incident on September 24, police briefly arrested Álvaro Victoria, a journalist with the privately owned weekly newspaper

Novo Jornal, at the S. Paulo market in Luanda, where he was taking videos of police beating street traders. Police roughed him up, threatened him, and held him for two hours. He was then released without charge.

Right to Peaceful Assembly

Since 2011, the government has responded to any kind of peaceful anti-government protest with excessive force, arbitrary arrests, unfair trials, harassment and intimidation of protest activists, and attacks against reporters and passers-by. In 2014, violent crackdowns against youth and other peaceful protesters continued.

In incidents on May 27, July 26, August 16 and 21, September 5 and 7, and October 3 and 11, police used excessive force to disperse youth demonstrations in Luanda, and arbitrarily arrested dozens of people. Many of the demonstrators were protesting silently and only displaying handwritten messages.

On November 23, a group of police commanders and state security agents cuffed and brutally beat the 26-year-old youth activist Laurinda Gouveia during two hours in a school, and filmed the beatings. Police arrested her when she took pictures of police mistreating two youth demonstrators at Independence Square in Luanda. The incident followed an intense campaign of intimidation by the authorities against the youth movement, which since October had been planning a peaceful anti-dos Santos rally on November 22 and 23.

On October 11, police arrested at least 12 youth protesters in Luanda and injured several with metal bars and batons. Most protesters were released that day without charge. One protester received a 30-day sentence for allegedly having torn the uniform of a police agent, and five more were held for nearly two weeks before being released, pending their trial on disobedience charges. They were denied medical care and access to lawyers until five days after their arrest.

On June 21, in Lubango, Huila province, police used teargas to disperse a peaceful rally of the teacher's union; teachers were then on strike. Police arrested 20 teachers and held them for four days without charges.

On May 27, rapid intervention police beat and arrested 17 protesters at Luanda's Independence Square, and threw teargas into the police vans where they were held. Police also arrested two opposition politicians who happened to be sitting in a nearby coffee shop. They were brutally beaten, photographed, and later released. The youth protest had called for justice for Isaías Cassule and António Alves Kamuningue, both protest activists who were abducted and executed by security agents in May 2012, and Manuel de Carvalho Ganga, an opposition activist who was killed by a presidential guard in November 2013.

Impunity for violent abuses by security agents against protest activists, opposition politicians, and journalists has been common. For example, the presidential guard who killed Manuel Ganga was charged, but at time of writing had not been arrested. On September 1, however, a Luanda court opened a trial against seven suspects—all police and intelligence officials in pretrial detention—for the killing of Cassule and Kamuningue. On September 7, the court suspended the trial alleging incompetence to judge over one of the main suspects, the former head of Luanda's domestic intelligence services. The suspect was promoted by President dos Santos to the rank of general in May. After criticism, the president later withdrew his promotion, and trial sessions resumed on November 18.

On August 14, a Luanda court acquitted the activist Manuel Nito Alves, who had been charged with “outrage” against the president.

Forced Evictions

Angola's laws neither adequately protect people from forced eviction nor enshrine the right to adequate housing. The majority of Angola's urban population lives in informal settlements without legal protection. In 2014, the authorities forcibly evicted an estimated 17,500 people from their homes in Luanda. Most evictions were carried out without prior notice or adequate compensation, and many with excessive use of force by police, armed forces, and government agents.

In January, the authorities demolished 2,000 houses in Luanda's central Chicala-Quilombo neighborhood. The government provided alternative housing to 700 families,

and moved 1,200 families—an estimated 6,000 people—to land plots without any infrastructure in Quissama, 80 kilometers away. At time of writing, most were still living in improvised shelters with limited access to social services and drinking water. In two further large-scale, forced evictions in Luanda in April and September—both without prior notice or compensation—authorities left an estimated 7,500 residents homeless.

The authorities also used excessive force in small-scale forced evictions. For example, on June 3, military and police destroyed 57 houses without prior notice in Luanda's Viana municipality, mistreated four residents, and temporarily arrested two men, including Rafael Morais, the coordinator of the housing rights organization SOS Habitat, who lives in the same neighborhood.

More positively, in August the government provided housing to 166 families in Luanda's outskirts—10 years after their forced eviction from the center.

Key International Actors

Angola's oil wealth and military power have made the country an influential power in Africa, attracting business interests from all over the world with very little consideration for the country's poor governance and human rights record.

In 2014, for the second time, Angola won a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council and underwent its second Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council in October. In apparent anticipation of such high-level reviews of its human rights performance, in September 2013 Angola signed—but has yet to ratify—four human rights treaties, including the Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol.

Similarly, in April and May 2014, Angola, for the first time, hosted a session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and a civil society forum. However, while the government signalled willingness to engage more constructively with African civil society, Angolan civil society complained about excessive government control of the participants and claimed that the government appeared more interested in using the gathering to promote its image by organizing guided tours in the capital.