

His Excellency Mr Georges Rebelo Chicoti
Minister of External Relations
Government of Angola
Palácio do Comércio
Avenida Comandante Gika
Luanda
Republic of Angola

11th of August, 2011

Your Excellency

We, the undersigned international civil society organisations, are writing to draw your attention to a number of concerns and to present urgent requests with regard to the human rights situation in Angola.

We are aware of the statement presented by the Secretary of State of External Relations Mr. Manuel Domingos Augusto at the 16th regular session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva; and call on the Government of Angola to ensure the full implementation of the human rights principles in respect of which the commitment of your Government was thus confirmed¹.

We cite the following documented examples of human rights abuses to illustrate our concerns and the risks of contradiction with the said statement:

Human rights defenders

- Activists, staff and members of the human rights defenders' organisation 'Associação Mãos Livres' have been victims of threats and had assets destroyed by unknown persons²
- Journalists have suffered threats and intimidation, or have been prosecuted, in different parts of the country in a variety of circumstances³
- SOS Habitat coordinator, Luiz Araujo, filed a detailed complaint at the police regarding a murder attempt against him in August 2009, but two years later there are no known results of that investigation⁴

¹ We recall that in this statement the Secretary of State, representing the Government of Angola, mentions for instance that the UPR (Universal Periodic Review) has been an important instrument to review the countries' human rights situation; and commends the contribution of civil society, among other aspects, to making the Human Rights Council "an important tool in addressing human rights abuses worldwide". His Excellency also stresses "the importance the Government of Angola attaches to improving living conditions of its people and ensuring the enjoyment of the basic rights of its citizenry"; adding that "The Government of Angola has already begun taking measures to address all the concerns that were raised at its review".

² Amongst other sources: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/03/09/angola-intimidation-campaign-stop-protest> (in English) and http://www.voanews.com/portuguese/news/03_06_lawycercarangola_voanews-117487113.html (in Portuguese)

³ Amongst other sources: <http://www.cpj.org/2010/09/angolan-radio-presenter-gunned-down.php> (in English, about the killing of journalist Alberto Graves Chacussanga, in 05.09.2011) <http://www.apostolado-angola.org/articleview.aspx?id=4464> and <http://www.cpj.org/2010/10/in-angola-popular-radio-satirist-injured-in-stabbi.php> (in Portuguese and in English, about the stabbing of radio journalist António Manuel "Jójó" in 22.10.2010) http://www.voanews.com/portuguese/news/03_28_11_Angola_book-118771024.html (in Portuguese, about journalist Domingos da Cruz, who was prevented from launching in March 2011 a book in which he criticizes the close links between the churches in Angola with the government) <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/03/16/angola-free-journalist-jailed-reporting-judge> (in English, about journalist Armando Chicoca, who was released after an international campaign against his prison)

- Young activists have suffered intimidation and anonymous death threats because of their involvement in public demonstrations⁵

Victims of evictions, demolitions, and market closures⁶

- The majority of the poor families who lost homes and property as a result of demolitions and evictions in Lubango, Huila province, in March 2010, are still living in inhumane conditions similar to “refugee camps” in Tchimukua and Tchavola areas. They suffer from insufficient access to water, shelter, health and education facilities and policing to protect them, and above all from lack of possibilities to earn an income to reconstruct their lives.⁷
- In Luanda, informal markets which have provided basic income for thousands of poor families have been gradually closed down without significant alternatives for the workers. Street vendors, many of them women, are often harassed and stripped of their belongings by fiscals / policemen, leaving citizens without means to earn their living.⁸
- Rural and urban poor communities and families still don’t have their rights to land and housing guaranteed.⁹

Victims of sexual violence

- From the 1st to the 19th of April 2011, at least 100 women were raped during the expulsion of 5,400 Congolese from Angola¹⁰.
- Since December 2003, tens of thousands of Congolese women and girls have been sexually abused during their expulsion from Angola to the Democratic Republic of Congo, by members of the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA).¹¹
- Until today, no member of the FAA responsible by these acts of sexual violence has been sanctioned nor tried
- No serious investigation about these violences has been opened and no specific known instructions were given to the FAA to put an end to abuses

We therefore call on the Government of Angola to ensure that:

⁴ Amongst other sources: <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/action/65072> (in English, about a call for protection of the activist in June 2010)

⁵ Amongst other sources: <http://centralangola7311.net/> (about the threats these young people have suffered, from March to July 2011)

⁶ Social and economical rights, as Your Excellency indicated in the mentioned statement, must be addressed “with the same level of commitment and enthusiasm” as the civic and political rights, towards a “world where there is respect for the dignity of all”.

⁷ Amongst other sources please see the ones mentioned in the following articles: http://www.voanews.com/portuguese/news/04_04_2011_angola_lubango_tchavola_voa_news_com-119188349.html and <http://quintasdedebate.blogspot.com/2010/10/testemunho-de-hilaria-vitima-de.html>

⁸ Amongst others: http://www.angonoticias.com/full_headlines.php?id=29488; http://club-k.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6939:administradora-da-ingombota-acusada-de-maltratar-zungueiras&catid=41013:a-voz-do-povo&Itemid=606; <http://patriciaguinevere.blogspot.com/2010/11/luanda-ultima-hora-policia-antiterror.html>

⁹ Amongst other sources: <http://seriousworldpolitics.blogspot.com/2010/02/food-security-now-at-center-of-global.html>; <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/comment/67574>; http://podium.publico.pt/Mundo/marcha-em-benguela-contra-demolicoes-e-desalojamentos_1429190; http://hic-al.compuarte.net.mx/noticias.cfm?noticia=967&id_categoria=17;

¹⁰ AFP/RFI : « RDC: viols d'une centaine de Congolaises expulsées d'Angola en avril », 6th May 2011 <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20110505-une-centaine-congolaises-violees-lors-leur-expulsion-angola>

¹¹ ACAT France’s August 2011 appeal on “Massive violations of expelled Angolans”: http://www.acatfrance.fr/appeal_mois.php?id=60#situation

1. with regard to human rights defenders

- Threats and attacks human rights defenders have suffered - including civil society activists, journalists, lawyers, religious leaders, academics and artists - are investigated by the police in a timely and efficient manner.
- The results of such investigations are made public and perpetrators are prosecuted;
- Other protection measures for human rights defenders are put in place as a matter of urgency.

2. with regard to the victims of evictions, house demolitions and market closures

- The right of poor citizens to land and to adequate housing is guaranteed in practice, as per the international and regional human rights instruments of which Angola is a State Party¹²
- The right of every woman and man to earn a living, especially in the cities, is also guaranteed in practice. For instance, the closure of informal markets should be preceded and accompanied by government measures to provide vendors with viable alternative income-generating ways for the majority to be able to earn a decent living.

3. with regard to the victims of sexual violence

- That the violence against deportees from Angola to DRC, including sexual violence, are subject to a thorough, rigorous investigation, with the support of the international community
- That its report and its findings are made public and the authors and perpetrators of these acts are punished and prosecuted according to law.

We look forward to hearing from you as a matter of urgency with your proposals for the implementation of these basic human rights in accordance with your Government's expressed commitment.

Yours faithfully

(Please see list of signatories below)

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¹² In its article 11.1, the States Parties of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) "recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions".

Cc :

- President of the National Assembly of Angola, Mr. António Paulo Kassoma
- UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms. Navi Pillay
- Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mrs. Margaret Sekaggya
- Honourable Commissioner Me. Reine Alapini-Gansou, Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights
- Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa, Ms. Lucy Asuagbor, Secretariat of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
- UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression Mr. Franck La Rue
- UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, Ms. Raquel Rolnik

Signatory organisations:



Clément Boursin

Responsable des programmes Afrique

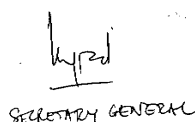
Action des chrétiens pour l'abolition de la torture (ACAT-France) / Action by Christians for the abolition of torture



Paul Valentin

Director International Department

Christian Aid



SECRETARY GENERAL



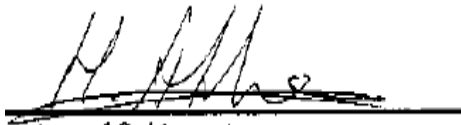
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CIVICUS



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Director Africa Programme
COHRE



Hakima Abbas
Executive Director
FAHAMU



Paula Schriefer
Director of Advocacy
Freedom House

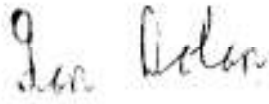
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ICCO Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation



Dr. Martin Bröckelmann-Simon
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MISEREOR German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation



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Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders: International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)



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