

PRESS RELEASE - THE OBSERVATORY

ANGOLA: The Angola 15 to be placed under house arrest, charges against them still to be dropped

Paris-Geneva, December 16, 2015 – Yesterday, a court accepted to convert the pre-trial detention of the Angola 15 to house arrest. While welcoming this measure, the Observatory reiterates its call to the authorities of Angola to guarantee their right to a fair trial and release them immediately and unconditionally.

On December 15, 2015, the Luanda Provincial Tribunal approved the request of the Public Prosecutor to place the pro-democracy activists detained since June 2015 under house arrest as of December 18. According to a public statement made by the General Attorney, this decision precedes the entry into force on December 18, 2015, of a new legislation on preventive measures adopted in September 2015, aimed at reducing prison overcrowding and excessive pre-trial detentions.

“The decision to place the Angola 15 under house arrest is a positive step towards the recognition of their rights. The Angolan authorities must now end all forms of judicial harassment against the activists and put an end to their ordeal by immediately and unconditionally releasing them”, FIDH President Karim Lahidji said.

According to reports, since their arrest, the Angola 15 have been subjected to acts of ill-treatment and violence. Several of them out of despair or to alert the general public on their ordeal, attempted suicide or participated to hunger strikes. The last incident concerned Mr. **Sedrick de Carvalho** who on December 15, 2015, attempted suicide. He was fortunately rescued by the prison guards. A few days earlier, in an open letter, he had threatened to commit suicide in protest against his 176 days of unlawful detention. He added that, during his six months in detention, he had spent more than 2,000 hours straight in solitary confinement without being able to see daylight. On December 14, 2015, eight out of the 15 were on hunger strike.

“The Angolan authorities are using psychological violence and pressure to push the Angola 15 to their limits. Using imprisonment to break and destroy human rights defenders is a extremely concerning practice that must end immediately”, OMCT Secretary General Gerald Staberock added.

The Angola 15 are youth activists arrested in June 2015 for discussing democratic reforms and peaceful protest. Most of them are known pro-democracy activists, who have been organizing peaceful protests often repressed by the authorities against the 35-year-regime of Angolan President Eduardo Dos Santos since 2011. On September 16, 2015, they were charged with “preparatory acts of rebellion” and “plotting against the President and other institutions”, both of which constitute crimes against the security of the Angolan State. Two additional human rights defenders are also facing the same charges, but were not detained. Several experts and international institutions have called for their release, including the European Parliament and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders was created in 1997 by FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). The objective of this programme is to intervene to prevent or remedy situations of repression against human rights defenders.

For more information, please contact:

- **FIDH: Audrey Couprie - Tel: +33 6 48 05 91 57 (Paris) / Arthur Manet - Tel: +33 6 72 28 42 94 (Paris)**
- **OMCT: Miguel Martín Zumalacárregui - Tel: +32 2 218 37 19 (Brussels) / Delphine Reculeau - Tel: +41 22 809 49 39 (Geneva)**