

Amnesty International Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Angola 2022

Angola's human rights record remained appalling. The pre- and post-election periods were mired in human rights violations including crackdowns on the right to peaceful assembly and protest, and the detention and torture of activists. In the south, extreme weather conditions, symptomatic of climate change, continued to impact the rights to food and water; and the associated humanitarian crisis remained unmitigated. Illegal occupation of communal grazing land in this region aggravated the dire conditions under which pastoralist communities lived.

Background

General elections took place on 24 August amid general discontent about the high cost of living and increasing government unpopularity. The young were among the most dissatisfied, incensed by growing unemployment and the government's failure to create the 500,000 jobs it promised during the 2017 electoral campaign. Crackdowns on peaceful assembly and protest by youth increased in the lead-up to the election. Unprecedented apathy among the electorate, with only 46% voting, contributed to the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) winning the election with 51% of the vote, the lowest margin ever recorded. It lost Luanda, the capital and the largest electoral district, for the first time to the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola. As allegations of electoral irregularities cast a shadow over the legitimacy of the MPLA's victory, President Lourenço was sworn in with a show of military might in the streets and skies of Luanda.

Freedom of expression, association and assembly

While there were no human rights violations reported at polling stations on election day, numerous crackdowns by security forces on the right to peaceful assembly, protest and freedom of expression in the pre- and post-electoral period were recorded. Security agents enjoyed impunity for these crimes.

The police continued to detain António Tuma, the assistant technical secretary for information of the Cabinda Independentist Movement (MIC), accused of "criminal association and rebellion". He and another MIC activist, Alexandre Dunge, had been arrested in their homes at dawn on 6 October 2021 and remained in detention at Cabinda Civil Penitentiary until 1 July when the Cabinda District Court absolved and released them. Hours later, António Tuma was re-arrested along with six other MIC – activists Sebastião Macaia Bungo, Joaquim do Nascimento Sita, Jorge Gomes, Teofilo Gomes, Marcos Futi Poba Polo and José Isamo– who had gathered to celebrate the release of their colleagues.

However, the Criminal Investigation Service (SIC) claimed that they had intended to go on a march to create public instability.

In March, the SIC detained 10 civic activists for planning a seminar on regional sustainable development at Agostinho Neto Primary School in Malanje province. SIC officers subjected the activists to torture in detention.

In April, police arrested and detained 22 youth activists, including three women, in Luanda. They were accused of taking part in an “unauthorized manifestation in disregard of the presuppositions of the law on the right to assembly and demonstration”. The activists intended to protest against Indra, the company contracted to manage the electoral process, and call for the release of political prisoners. After summary trials, 20 of them were acquitted, while two were ordered to pay fines as an equivalent to a 40-day prison sentence.

The authorities tightened their grip on the right to freedom of association by preventing civil society meetings from taking place ahead of the general election. On 21 May, the police prevented two civil society organizations – Omunga and the Association for the Development of Culture and Human Rights – from holding a conference on peace building.¹

Mass arrests were carried out following the election. On 26 August dozens of young people, including children, took to the streets in Lobito city, Benguela province, to peacefully protest the provisional election results. The national police dispersed them with tear gas and gunfire and arrested eight activists and 11 bystanders. The following day, a group of young people were dispersed by police when they attempted a peaceful demonstration against the provisional results. Twenty members of the group were arrested, including activists Avisto Mbota, Albino Elavoko, António Gomes, Maria Do Carmo Correia and Mário Hulunda Raúl who were gathered inside a residence where the police surprised them with gunshots, arrests and beatings. By 29 August, a total of 40 young people had been presented to Lobito District Court on charges of public disobedience. The arresting officers failed to appear in court and the case was dismissed due to lack of evidence.

On 15 September, as President Lourenço was being sworn in, police detained civic activist Osvaldo Caholo for seven hours before releasing him without charge. Three days before, he had given an interview to Deutsche Welle where he said that in the next five years, the MPLA would turn Angola into a terrorist state against its own people. In the same month, 12 civic activists were detained at the SIC premises in Luanda, accused of posting videos on social media to “sow insecurity, hatred and panic”. They were released without charge after four days on 28 September.

Also in Luanda, on 20 September, unidentified men wearing facial disguises invaded the home of Claudio Emmanuel, a radio show host, and held his family hostage after one of his guests criticized the intelligence services on air. The men tortured Claudio Emmanuel's wife, tying her up, beating her and using a hot knife to inflict more than 30 cuts to her limbs. They also threatened to kill her baby if she screamed. Although the case was reported to the police who later visited Claudio Emmanuel's home, no one was held accountable.

On 29 September, civic activists and their families received death threats for organizing protests against the election results. For example, Hermenegildo Victor, coordinator of the Civic Movement Mudei, and Basílio da Fonseca, leader of the civic organization, Malanjina Resistance, received death threats on their mobile phones from unknown sources.

Right to food and water

Extreme weather conditions symptomatic of climate change continued to affect lives in the south, including in the provinces of Cunene, Huíla, Kwando Kubango and Namibe, where drought reached unprecedented levels in recent years, causing food and water shortages, and malnutrition resulting in the death of people and cattle.²

The Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) which describes the severity of food shortages said food insecurity in the Cunene, Huíla and Namibe provinces was among the worst in the world, affecting about 1.58 million people, of whom 43% were classified by the IPC as being in crisis phase 3 and 15% in emergency phase 4. Around 400,000 children were projected to be acutely malnourished in 2022, according to UNICEF and OCHA. Some adults and children resorted to eating grass to survive. There was a massive loss of livestock caused by fodder shortages as a consequence of the drought which aggravated food insecurity levels among pastoralists. Meanwhile, the war in Ukraine led to a 45% increase in wheat prices in Africa, according to the African Development Bank, which further aggravated food shortages.

Refugees and migrants

The drought, widespread cattle losses and crop failure continued to drive people to neighbouring Namibia as the only viable option in the desperate search for food and water. Thousands of people trekked to Namibia on foot, without food and water, some of them sick and malnourished; many of them died on the journey. In Namibia, they sheltered under cardboard and plastic bags or slept outside on the ground, without cover.

Whereas there was little government relief for those who remained in Angola, the Namibian government and the Red Cross made visible efforts to provide relief for the refugees. Hunger forced many of those who had been repatriated to Angola to return to Namibia.

Forced evictions

The expropriation of communal grazing land for commercial ranching in southern Angola continued, despite calls by local and international human rights organizations to end the practice. The land transfers from pastoralist communities to commercial ranchers exacerbated food and water shortages by limiting the communities' access to arable land and preventing them from transferring their livestock to alternative grazing land in accordance with the seasons. Land transfers were often made without the free, prior and informed consent of the pastoralists, who include Indigenous and tribal peoples. The authorities and the ranchers violated pastoralists' procedural and political rights, including their rights to just compensation, community consultations, environmental impact assessment and resettlement. For instance, on 12 October, the police attempted to evict the Mucubai community from their land in Ndamba on the outskirts of Moçâmedes, Namibe Province, to facilitate a land transfer to a commercial rancher. The police burned 16 houses and personal belongings including blankets, clothes and water containers. A five-year-old boy disappeared following the raid and the residents feared he may have been burned alive in one of the houses.³

1. ["Angola: Authorities repress civil society organizations ahead of election", 24 May](#)

2. [Angola: Make the Vote Meaningful for Human Rights Observance: Human Rights Manifesto for Angola Ahead of the 2022 General Election, 16 August](#)

3. "Angola: Authorities must account for missing five-year-old following violent raid in Ndamba", 20 October

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Austrian Red Cross
Austrian Centre for Country of
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Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041
Wien
T +43 1 589 00 583
F +43 1 589 00 589
info@ecoi.net

Contact
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F.A.Q.
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