

# THE POLICE ARE NOT ON THE GROUND TO DISTRIBUTE SWEETS

SECURITY FORCES' VIOLENCE IN ANGOLA



# INTRODUCTION

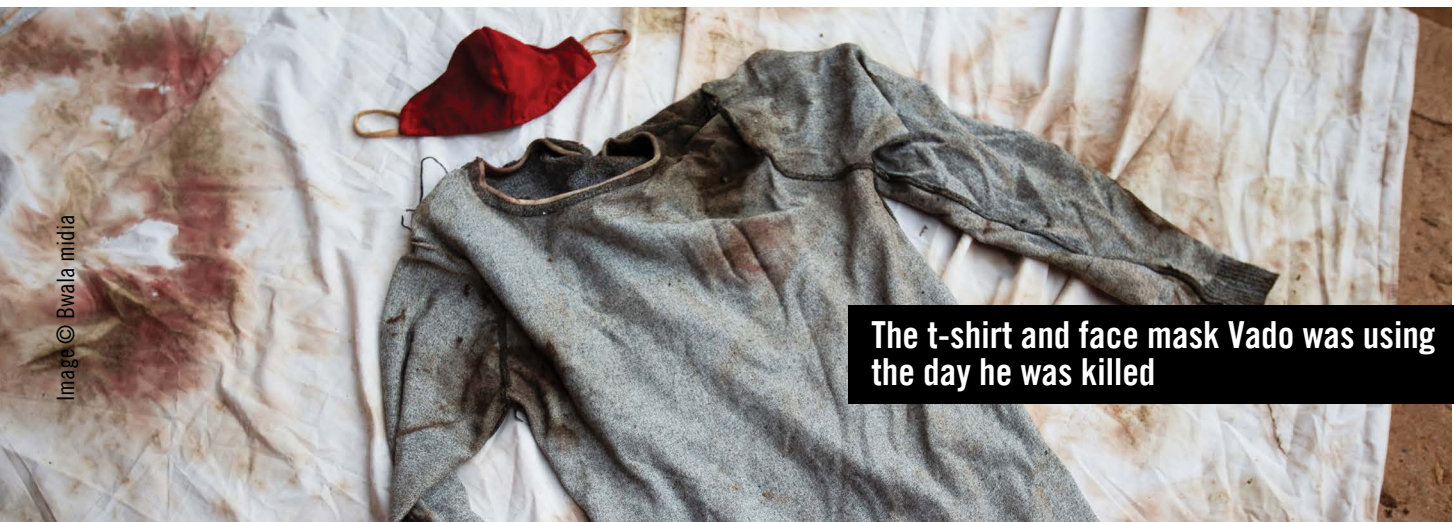
Since the declaration of the state of emergency to deal with the spread of COVID-19 in March 2020, Angolan security forces in various provinces have resorted to unnecessary, excessive, abusive and even lethal force to deal with infringements of public health measures and peaceful demonstrations. Amnesty International and **OMUNGA**, an Angolan human rights organisation, documented several peaceful protests that were met with police violence. The organisations also reported **several killings committed** by the Angolan security forces, including officers of the Angolan National Police (Polícia Nacional de Angola – PNA) and of the Angolan Armed Forces (Forças Armadas Angolanas – FAA).

Between March and September, Amnesty International and OMUNGA documented ten killings by the Angolan security forces, including officers of the Angolan National Police (Polícia Nacional de Angola – PNA) and of the Angolan Armed Forces (Forças Armadas Angolanas – FAA). The victims were **Mário Palma Romeu – Marito**, 14 years old, **Altino Holandês Afonso – Hernani**, 15 years old, **Helena Sebastião Mussunda**, 15 years old, **Mabiala Rogério Ferreira Mienandi – Kilson**, 15 years old, **Clinton Dongala Carlos**, 16 years old, **João de Assunção Eliseu**, 20 years old, **António Vulola**, 21 years old, **Vanildo Sebastião Futa**, 21 years old, **José Quiocama Manuel**, 25 years old and **Sílvio Dala**, 35 years old. The organisations believe the true death toll is likely to be much higher.

The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened the impact of recurrent social and economic crises on the Angolan people, fanning popular discontent. In September 2020, the population took to the streets to protest the current government broken promises, and widespread hunger and poverty. The authorities responded with violence, with security forces using water cannons, rubber bullets, batons and tear gas to disperse the protesters. On 11 November 2020, grassroots movements organised demonstrations against corruption and the high cost of living and called for municipal elections in several provinces of Angola. In Luanda municipality, as a result of severe injuries, one protester died, **Inocêncio de Matos**, a 26-year-old university student, and dozens were injured.

The use of excessive, disproportional and unnecessary force by the police is an old and widespread problem in Angola and local civil society groups have been raising this issue for many years. Rather than seeking dialogue with civil society representatives and protest leaders, the government has also continuously repressed the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. Protesters, activists and human rights defenders have faced human rights violations, including ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests and detention.

Cover image: Vado's funeral © Bwala midia



The t-shirt and face mask Vado was using the day he was killed

Image © Bwala midia

# Helena was shot inside the police station



Helena's funeral

Image © Bwala midia

On the evening of 10 September 2020, **Helena Sebastião Mussunda**, 15 years old, was fatally hit by a shot fired by a PNA agent in the neighbourhood of Ossos, Cazenga municipality, Luanda province.

Earlier that evening, some youths were fighting in the neighbourhood. Some residents of the neighbourhood, to end the fight, took one of these youths to Ossos police station. Many people began to crowd inside and outside of the police station, asking the police officers to solve the fight.

The police proceeded to disperse the gathering, and a police officer shot several times. One of the bullets hit Helena, who was inside the police station, in the chest. She died immediately. Helena was two months pregnant. The police officer responsible for the shots left the police station when he realized that Helena was without vital signs. Residents, angered by Helena's death, set fire to the police station which was practically reduced to ashes.

## “Doctor Sílvio Dala”

On the evening of 1 September 2020, paediatrician **Sílvio Dala**, 35 years old, was alone in his car when he was approached by agents of the PNA for not wearing a face mask. The agents took Sílvio to the Catotes police station, in the Rocha Pinto area, Luanda municipality. The police station did not have facilities for electronic payment of fines and Sílvio called a family member to come and help with the payment.

The circumstances that followed and led to the death of Sílvio are unclear and currently under investigation. PNA agents claimed that while waiting at the police station, Sílvio had malaise and passed out. According to PNA agents, he suffered a head injury as a result of his fall and was then taken to Hospital do Prenda, but arrived there dead. The spokesperson for the Multisectoral Commission to Combat COVID-19, Commissioner Waldemar José, reported that the autopsy result confirmed that the paediatrician died of a cardiac arrest and he did not suffer any physical injury.

However, the National Union of Doctors of Angola (Sindicato Nacional dos Médicos Angolanos - SNMA) has contested the autopsy presented by the government. According to the SNMA, one of Sílvio’s colleagues went to the morgue of Hospital Josina Machel to identify the body and said that the cut on his forehead could not be a result of a fall. The SNMA also complained that the union’s representative, a pathologist, was not allowed by police officers to monitor the autopsy.

There is an ongoing judicial process to investigate the responsibility of police officers in the death of Sílvio. The police agents involved in the incident were suspended from work while the investigation is ongoing.

**“ The colleague Sílvio left four children. The youngest is only three months old. The colleague’s wife does not work. How will his family meet their ends after six months? Since the law allows six months of salary following the death of the employee. Sílvio’s family, his parents and close relatives, relied on him for basic needs. Now, who is going to provide for this family?”**

Miguel Sebastião, doctor representative of SNMA, interviewed by Amnesty International and OMUNGA, 9 September 2020



**Medical vests with red blood-like paint during 12 September peaceful demonstration**

Image © Bwala midia

# Vanildo was using a face mask.

## Why did this happen?

On 22 August, **Vanildo Sebastião Futa** – also known as Vado among his friends – 21 years old, was killed by an agent of the armed forces in the Zango 3 neighbourhood, approximately 500 metres from the door of his house, at around 9.30 pm.

Vado and two friends left his house to go to a nearby cantina. On the way, they came across three members of the FAA. One of Vado's friends, Lucas Gaboa, was not wearing a face mask and was approached by the military agents. Vado and his other friend watched the situation from a distance.

Witnesses told Amnesty International and OMUNGA that one of the agents requested the payment of 2,000 kwanzas (about US\$3) to let Lucas go away. Lucas, however, had only 1,500 kwanzas and, according to the witnesses, one of the agents then started to get nervous and repeated that he wanted the full amount of 2,000 kwanzas. Lucas then ran away, but as he turned to run he heard a shot. Vado, who was observing the situation from a distance, was hit in his back and ran about 100 meters before falling.

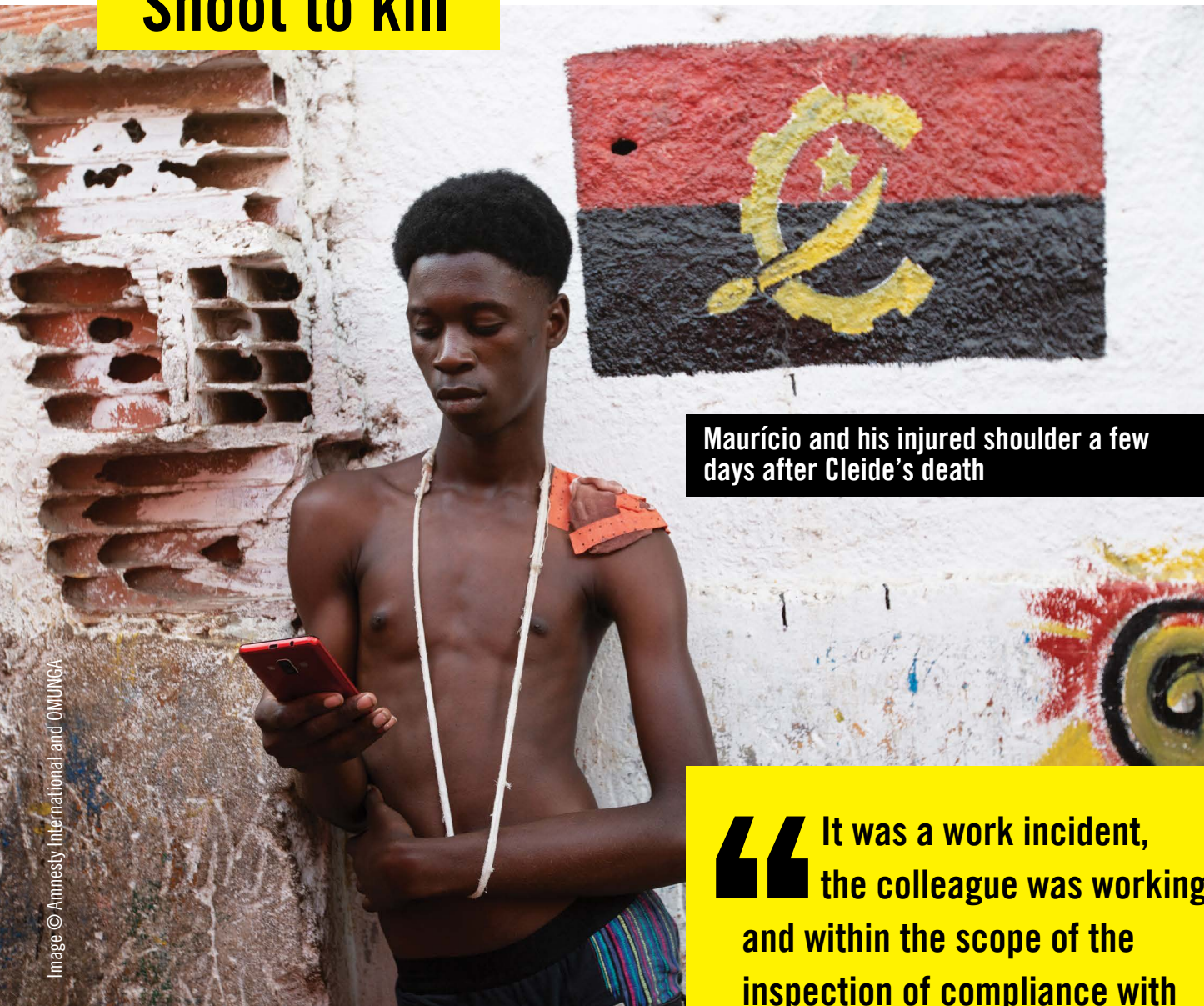
There is an ongoing criminal investigation against the suspected agents responsible for his death.



Vado's funeral

Image © Bwala.mindia

## “Shoot to kill”



Maurício and his injured shoulder a few days after Cleide's death

Image © Amnesty International and OMUNGA

On 13 July, dozens of Angolans took to the streets of Luanda to protest against the murder of another young boy in Luanda municipality. **José Quiocama Manuel**, popularly known as Cleide, a moto-taxi driver, was on his way to a friend's house after finishing work that evening in the Prenda neighbourhood. According to testimonies to Amnesty International and OMUNGA, it was around 12 am when people started to scream that “the police was coming”. Cleide and **Maurício José Isabel Muongo**, a 16-year-old boy, tried to hide but a police officer had already fired his gun. Mauricio was shot in the shoulder and survived. Cleide was shot and died immediately.

“ It was a work incident, the colleague was working and within the scope of the inspection of compliance with COVID-19 preventive measures, a group of young people, in Prenda, rose against the police, and in an attempt to push the group away, the colleague accidentally fired, killing one of them.”

Nestor Goubel, spokesperson of the provincial command of the National Police of Luanda, referring to the killing of Cleide at a press conference on 13 July

# Mistaken for a thief

On 4 July 2020, 16-year-old **Clinton Dongala Carlos** was shot dead at around 6.50 pm in the Boa Esperança 1 neighbourhood, Cacuo Municipality, Luanda province. Clinton had just finished dinner at his aunt's house and was returning home, a 300 metre walk. According to testimonies, six security forces agents, including two FAA members and one PNA agent, all in uniform, and two plainclothes PNA agents, known to the local community, were chasing suspects. The neighbours who were on the street, noticing something was off, ran to protect themselves. The officers then chased Clinton, who was running towards his home, and shot him in the back. According to witnesses, the officers approached Clinton and, probably realizing that the boy was 'innocent', asked neighbours for water and poured it in his face. The neighbours who were in hiding heard a second shot. When the officers left, the neighbours saw that Clinton had just been shot in the face.

On the evening of that day, Clinton's neighbours and family members broke into the homes of police officers who allegedly murdered Clinton and destroyed their belongings. Three neighbours and four family members of Clinton were arrested and taken to the 41st police station. On 6 July, they were transferred to Cacuo Municipal Command where they were held for 14 days. On 20 July, the seven people were released without charges after paying a deposit of 140,000 kwanzas (approximately US\$ 250).

Clinton's parents told Amnesty International and OMUNGA that the police informed them that the officers suspected of criminal responsibility for Clinton's murder were in prison, but they have not received other information about the procedure against them.



Clinton's family

Image © Amnesty International and OMUNGA

# He dreamt of being a soccer player

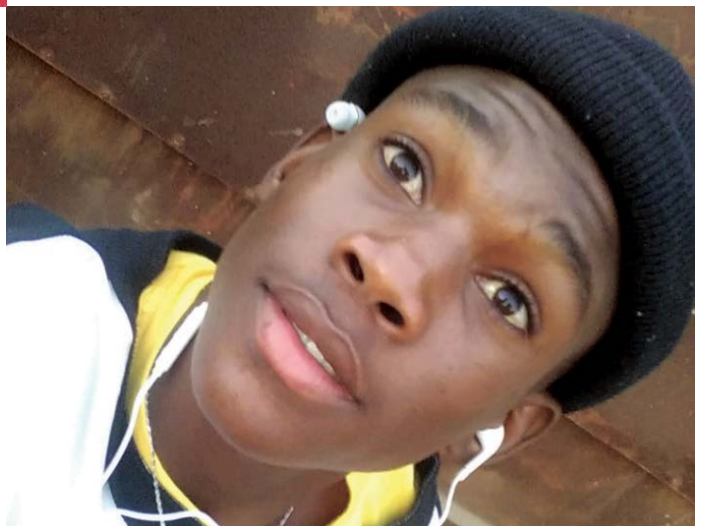


Picture of Kilson taken in the same week he was assassinated

Image © family photo

On 3 July 2020, **Mabiala Rogério Ferreira Mienandi**, known as Kilson by his loved ones, a 15-year-old boy, and his friends, were in the Condomínio, a field where teenagers spend their time practicing sport, in the Mabore neighbourhood, Cazenga municipality, Luanda province. According to witnesses who spoke to Amnesty International and OMUNGA, at around 7 am, a police vehicle approached the camp and, without giving any warning, the officers started shooting at the boys, who ran in all directions to hide. Kilson, however, fell to the ground. According to witnesses, three policemen got out of the car and approached Kilson, gave the boy three kicks, and when they realised he was bleeding, they went back to the car and drove away. People then started shouting that they had killed him. Kilson's friends came back and saw that he had been hit in the head. Neighbours rescued Kilson and took him to the hospital where he died. After that day, young people in the neighbourhood avoid going to the field to play fearing that the police will show up again.

Kilson had a group of friends who spent the day rapping, reading and exercising. Since March, those were the kids' pastime activities as their schools closed due to COVID-19. To date, the youth have not received any information about the restart of classes. According to his friends, Kilson dreamed of being a soccer player and singer.







**Pedro Mienandi,  
Kilson's dad**

## Humiliation as penalisation

On the morning of 17 June, at around 9 am, **João de Assunção Eliseu**, 20 years old, had just left his room and was heading to the communal bathroom of the village where he lived when two officers of the PNA approached him. According to one of the witnesses of the incident, João told the officers that he was just going to the bathroom and would go back to his room and put on his mask. As a punishment, the two police officers forced João to do somersaults, while pointing their guns at his face. João requested that the officers take a break because he was sick and tired, but in response one of the officers fired his gun into the air beside João, who fell on the ground and remained motionless. The neighbours alerted the officers that João had problems with his heart and blood hypertension. The police officer continued shouting at João, ordering him to stand up. When he did not react, the officers called an ambulance that arrived two hours later. He was taken to Hospital Cajueiros, in Cazenga municipality, where he died.

João's body was kept in a common morgue (known as *camara cinco*), where unidentified bodies are sent to before being buried in a mass grave. His friends were able to claim the body and give him

a proper funeral. Offering condolences, the police sent a food basket to João's house. His friends are still waiting for the results of his autopsy and have no information on the procedures against the police officers. They reported being insulted at the police station when they requested information about the case, the cops told them, "Who are you to come here and ask us any question?"

João was abandoned by his parents when he was a baby, his family was his friends with whom he grew up in the Arnaldo Janssen Children's Shelter (Centro de Acolhimento de Crianças Arnaldo Janssen – CACAJ), a catholic missionary institution in Palanca neighbourhood, where he was still living.



# It is dangerous to visit your grandmother



Altino's parents

**Altino Holandês Afonso**, affectionately called Hernani, was a 15-year-old student and soccer player at the Inter local sports club. On 5 June 2020, at around 8 pm, Altino took his shower and went to his family's canteen to say hello to his grandmother and his auntie, just nearby his home. Minutes later, they heard the police shooting possibly to disperse people from the streets. Immediately, his aunt hid behind the canteen counter, while Altino ran to get into

his auntie's home. Witnesses told Amnesty International and OMUNGA that a police officer chased him and shot Altino when he was just in front of the house' door. Altino was brought to the hospital but died moments later. Witnesses of the murder told Amnesty International and OMUNGA that the agent who shot Altino was drunk. The police officer is in preventive detention awaiting formal charges and trial.

# Marito was only 14 years old



On the morning of 13 May 2020, the mother of **Mário Palma Romeu**, a 14-year-old boy affectionally called Marito, asked him to buy sugar in the square at the Tombas' beach, in Benguela municipality, Benguela province. That same morning, young men working on fishing boats on the same beach started a riot, and the police were called in to intervene. Trying to disperse the population from the beach, a police officer shot twice into the air. The second shot hit Marito's head, and he died immediately. The provincial police command of Benguela, as a form of compensation, paid for partial costs of Marito's funeral and sent a food basket containing two boxes of pasta, a bag of beans, a box of oil and two bags of cornmeal to Marito's family.

Marito and his brother worked at the fish market to help at home because their mother, who raises her children alone, is sick and can no longer work. The mother is in profound grief and struggling to bring food home.

The officer responsible for Marito's death is currently on preventive detention while waiting for the investigation into the murder of Marito. The Minister of Interior in Benguela also opened a disciplinary procedure against the perpetrator.

“ My little one used to help me bring income to help to feed his siblings. I have pain in my chest, and I can't work anymore. Now we have no more income. I told the police that my son's assassination should not be in vain. When a person dies, there must be justice.”

Marito's mother's interview to Amnesty International and OMUNGA, June 2020



Marito's mother at a peaceful demonstration against police violence, Benguela City

Image of demonstration © Amnesty International and OMUNGA

# POLICE RESPONSE

The Commander-General of the PNA has publicly committed to investigate and hold accountable all agents responsible for killing individuals during the implementation of COVID-19 regulations in 2020. Further to this, we urge the government of Angola to take concrete steps to cease the violation of the human rights by the Angolan security forces and implement systematic reforms to ensure the observance of laws, regulations and codes of conduct that regulate the functioning of the police in accordance to international human rights law and standards.

The association Mãos Livres is providing legal assistance to ensure that the human rights violations and abuses are promptly, thoroughly, independently and impartially investigated, those suspected to be responsible for the killings are brought to justice, and that the families receive justice and effective remedies, including adequate compensation.



# ANGOLAN LIVES MATTER

On 12 September, peaceful demonstrations took place in several Angolan provinces, including Benguela, Bié, Cabinda, Cunene, Kwanza-Sul, Huíla, Luanda, Moxico and Namibe. The protests brought together thousands of people across the country who demanded the end of police abuses in Angola, reform within the PNA and the resignation of the Interior Minister, Eugênio Laborinho, who had remained silent regarding the killings of teenagers and young men by the police. The demonstration took place peacefully, and no incident of violence was registered.

As social and economic crises continued to deepen in 2020, the current President's popularity continued to decline. Frustrated with the precarious living conditions in the country, Angolans, particularly youth, took to the streets to protest peacefully and exercise their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. The authorities have responded with excessive, unnecessary and indiscriminate force. Dozens of people have been arrested, many injured, with at least one death reported.

## A WAVE OF PROTEST



22 September demonstration

**“The Angolan population is eager for changes in the country, completely dissatisfied with the political demagogue. The social conditions of Angolans deteriorate day by day. Purchasing power is beyond possibilities. Therefore, youth suffer the most, due to the lack of job opportunities, education, health and so on. In this context, the youth are claiming their rights. As such, they call for demonstrations and surrender their body and soul in order to achieve the urgent changes that society needs.”**

Salvador Freire, Executive Director of Associação Mãos Livres (Free Hands Organisation) – Lawyers for Human Rights

# 24 OCTOBER PROTEST

On 24 October 2020, peaceful protests against the precarious living conditions and calling for municipal elections were met with police violence in the streets of Luanda and Huambo provinces. In Luanda, the Angolan National Police (Polícia Nacional de Angola – PNA) put up barricades to prevent protesters from gathering at the meeting point and arbitrarily arrested 103 protesters and by-passers, including journalists, mothers with children, and teenagers younger than 16 years old. The police forcefully removed two journalists from Radio Essencial, one photographer from Valor Económico newspaper and their driver from their car and physically assaulted them. According to their testimonies, the police took the four professionals to the Luanda’s Provincial Command where they were held for two days. On 26 October, they were released without any charges. Their electronic equipment, including mobile phones and a photographic camera, were confiscated by the police.

The 103 protesters that were arrested faced a summary trial between 26 October and 1 November 2020. The Luanda Provincial Court convicted 71 people for the crime of “disobedience” and sentenced each of them to one-month in prison, converted to a fine. The protesters filed an appeal, and the Supreme Court is yet to decide on the case. Those who were arrested reported that while under police custody, they were transported from prison cells to the Tribunal in overcrowded cars, despite the risks posed by COVID-19, and spent their days in crowded cells that did not allow them to exercise physical distancing as required by public health regulations – ironically, the exact same reason that they had been initially convicted.

One day before the planned 24 October demonstrations, the President of the Republic issued the presidential decree number 276/20, in which article 29 prohibits gatherings of more than five people in the streets.





# 11 NOVEMBER NATIONAL PROTEST

Following the thwarted demonstrations of 24 October, grassroots movements called for new demonstrations across the country on 11 November 2020 to mark 45 years of Angola's independence. People took to the streets to protest against the high costs of living and to call for municipal elections in Benguela, Cuanza Norte, Huíla, Huambo, Luanda and Namibe provinces in Angola. In several provinces, the security forces closed roads and put up barricades to prevent people from assembling at meeting points. The security forces used water cannons, rubber bullets, batons and tear gas to disperse the protesters. Amnesty International and OMUNGA have received reports of isolated pockets of violence by some protesters in response to the hard-handed and indiscriminate use of force by the police. Several people were injured, and some were taken to the hospital, while an unknown number of people were arbitrarily arrested and released hours later without any charges. As a result of severe injuries, Inocêncio Alberto de Matos, a 26-year-old student of computer engineering at the Universidade Agostinho Neto, in Luanda city, died. The autopsy is yet to confirm the cause of his death.

On 10 November, as an attempt to prevent the planned protest from happening, the Angolan security forces arbitrarily detained youth activists involved in its preparations. The security forces arrested three youths in Cabinda municipality and another three in Balombo municipality, Benguela province. On 18 November, the Benguela Provincial Tribunal rejected the accusation for the crime of disobedience and ordered the release of the three youths, who were arrested in Balombo municipality.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, recently warned governments across the world about responding with excessive and disproportionate force to protests, and speaking particularly about abuses committed by the Nigerian armed forces she stated: "In a population with such a young median age, it is important to listen to the grievances of the younger generation and make an effort to address the multiple problems they face, which include -- but are far from confined to -- police violence and violations".

We echo these remarks, and urge the Angolan authorities to pay close attention and act accordingly.

1. UN Officer of the High Commissioner, 21 October 2020

# THE ANGOLAN AUTHORITIES NEED TO **DO** **MORE AND** **BETTER**

The government's announcement recognising the use of unnecessary and excessive force by the police is an important first step in addressing these human rights violations. We are calling for an immediate end to security forces' use of unnecessary and excessive force, and for human rights violations to be promptly, thoroughly,

independently and impartially investigated, and for all those responsible to be brought to justice in fair trials. We are also urging Angolan authorities to guarantee that protesters can exercise their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, which are protected by the Angolan constitution and international treaties ratified by the country.

But there is also an urgent need for systemic reform within the Angolan security forces. Nobody should have to fear for their life when encountering the police, and the Angolan authorities must put in place accountability mechanisms to ensure prompt, impartial and thorough investigations of allegations of unlawful use of force by security forces. The government of Angola must implement systematic reforms to ensure the observance of laws, regulations and codes of conduct that regulate the functioning of the security forces in accordance to international human rights law and standards.







Image © Bwala média

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND OMUNGA WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN ANGOLA AND URGE THE AUTHORITIES TO ADDRESS THIS GROWING CRISIS. WE URGE THE GOVERNMENT OF ANGOLA TO:**

- Take immediate and urgent steps to ensure that law enforcement officials stop resorting to the use of unnecessary and excessive force as a means of punishment at any time, including for violations of COVID-19 regulations;
- Immediately end police violence against peaceful protestors, end the practice of arbitrary dispersal of peaceful assemblies, stop detaining individuals before protests as a way to thwart demonstrations, and fully respect the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly for all persons in Angola;
- End all criminal proceedings that have been initiated against individuals in connection with their attempts to exercise the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, and where these proceedings have resulted in conviction and fines and/or imprisonment, quash the conviction and drop the fines;
- Take steps to promptly, thoroughly, independently and impartially investigate allegations of the killings of young people by security forces while enforcing the COVID-19 regulations and dispersing protestors from streets, and ensure that all those responsible are held to account in fair trials;
- Adopt immediate and urgent measures to provide justice to the victims of human rights violations related to the government's use of unnecessary and excessive force, including appropriate and adequate reparations for the families of the victims of police's use of lethal force;
- Take immediate and urgent steps to empower and support people to comply with COVID-19 regulations, including by ensuring access to public health information and by enabling people who are marginalised to meet their essential needs without discrimination.



Image © Bwala media

© Amnesty International 2020  
First published in 2020  
by Amnesty International Ltd  
Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street  
London WC1X 0DW, UK

Index: AFR 12/3424/2020  
Original language: English

Amnesty International is a movement of 10 million people which mobilises the humanity in everyone and campaigns for change so we can all enjoy our human rights. Our vision is of a world where those in power keep their promises, respect international law and are held to account. We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion and are funded mainly by our membership and individual donations. We believe that acting in solidarity and compassion with people everywhere can change our societies for the better.



[amnesty.org](https://www.amnesty.org)

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**

