



Angola

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Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
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Angola is a constitutional republic in transition after its 27-year civil war ended in 2002. Legislation provides for decentralization; however, the Government remained highly centralized and dominated by the Presidency. The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) has ruled the country since its independence from Portugal in 1975. President Jose Eduardo dos Santos of the MPLA, who assumed power in 1979, won 49 percent of the votes cast in a 1992 election that U.N. observers considered generally free and fair. The Government of National Reconciliation was formed in 1997 after the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and 10 smaller opposition parties joined the ruling MPLA. The National Assembly was weak; while opposition deputies held approximately 43 percent of National Assembly seats, few mechanisms exist to check the power of the MPLA majority or defeat legislation supported by the executive branch. The judiciary was subject to executive influence, functioned poorly at the provincial and municipal levels and did not always ensure due process.

The Ministry of Interior, through the Angolan National Police (ANP), is responsible for internal security. The internal intelligence service is directly answerable to the Office of the Presidency. The Armed Forces of Angola (FAA) is responsible for external security but also has domestic responsibilities; the FAA conducted counterinsurgency operations against the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda Armed Forces of Cabinda (FLEC FAC). The civilian authorities maintained effective control of the security forces. Members of the security forces committed human rights abuses.

The mixed economy, dominated by oil, grew by over 10 percent during the year; however, most of the country's wealth remained concentrated in a few hands. Although commercial and agricultural activity in urban and rural areas increased since the end of the war, 70 percent of the population of approximately 13 million continued to live in poverty. Approximately 85 percent of the population residing outside of Luanda were employed in agriculture, mostly at a subsistence level. Corruption, nontransparent contracting practices, and unfair enforcement of regulatory and tax regimes favored the wealthy and politically influential. Poor governance continued to limit the provision of basic services to most citizens. Although conditions improved in many parts of the country, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) estimated that 1.1 million citizens were still at risk of food insecurity, with 500,000 needing immediate food assistance.

The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. The right of citizens to change their government remained restricted due to the postponement of elections. Members of the security forces committed unlawful killings, were responsible for disappearances, tortured, beat, raped, and otherwise abused persons. Impunity remained a problem. Prison conditions were harsh and life-threatening. The Government continued to use arbitrary arrest and detention, and lengthy pretrial detention was a problem. The Government infringed on citizens' privacy rights. The Government at times restricted freedom of speech and of the press, and harassed, beat, and detained journalists. The Government at times restricted freedom of assembly. Unlike in previous years, there were no reports that internally displaced persons (IDPs) were displaced by conflict; however, there were unconfirmed reports that refugees were included in the expulsions carried out during Operacao Brilhante. The Government began implementing a law that could increase restrictions on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Violence and discrimination against women, as well as adult and child prostitution, was common. Children and persons with disabilities continued to suffer as a result of poor economic conditions and limited protections against discrimination. Indigenous people suffered from discrimination and economic exploitation. There were reports of trafficking in persons. The Government continued to dominate much of the labor movement and did not always respect worker rights. Child labor was a problem.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no political killings by the Government or its agents; however, security forces killed an unknown number of persons. Local human rights organizations reported that police and, increasingly, members of the Civil Defense Organization (ODC) were the primary human rights abusers and responsible for most unlawful killings (see Section 1.c.). Impunity remained a serious problem.

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