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## 2008 Human Rights Report: Angola

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

**2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices**

**February 25, 2009**

Angola is a constitutional republic with an estimated population of 16 million. The ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), led by President Jose Eduardo dos Santos since 1979, has been in power since independence in 1975 and exercised tight, centralized control over government planning, policymaking, and media outlets. On September 5 and 6, the government held the first post-war legislative elections since 1992. Domestic and international observers reported that polling throughout the country was peaceful and generally credible, despite a ruling party advantage due to state control of media and other resources, and serious logistical failures that marred polling in the capital of Luanda. Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces.

The government's human rights record remained poor, and there were numerous, serious problems. Human rights abuses included: the abridgement of citizens' right to elect officials at all levels; unlawful killings by police, military, and private security forces; security force torture, beatings, and rape; harsh prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; official corruption and impunity; judicial inefficiency and lack of independence; lengthy pretrial detention; lack of due process; restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association; forced evictions without compensation; and discrimination, violence, and abuse perpetrated against women and children.

### 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 reports that the government or its agents committed politically motivated killings; however, human rights activists and domestic media sources reported that security forces arbitrarily killed 23 persons during the year.

Impunity remained a problem, although the government prosecuted some human rights violators. Results of investigations into security force abuses were seldom released.

Domestic media and local human rights activists reported that police use of excessive force resulted in killings.

During the year there were multiple media reports in Luanda that police deliberately targeted and killed persons suspected of gang and other criminal activity.

On July 23, five policemen shot and killed eight teenagers. While the policemen claimed to be part of a special gang task force tasked with ridding neighborhoods of gang members, the national police denied the existence of the task force and relieved the policemen of duty. Prosecutors charged the policemen with murder, and they remained in police custody awaiting trial at year's end.

An investigation was still pending regarding a 2007 police killing of two actors while they filmed a movie in a high-crime area of Luanda. The police declined to prosecute the alleged perpetrators, stating they could not be positively identified.

In December 2007 police shot and killed two vendors in an open-air market during a raid on vendors of pirated DVDs. The minister of interior and national police commander immediately suspended the officers in question and promised a swift investigation. The government was still considering civil criminal charges against the accused police officers at year's end.

The Memorandum of Understanding for Peace and Reconciliation for Cabinda Province, signed in 2006, largely brought an end to the insurgency in the province, although sporadic attacks by dissident factions of the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC) and counter-insurgency operations by the Armed Forces of Angola (FAA) continued during the year. In 2007 there was one report of an unlawful killing in Cabinda that could be linked to FAA soldiers. The incident remained under investigation. There were no updates during the year regarding the 2006 unlawful killing in Cabinda linked to FAA soldiers.

Reports of killings by private security companies in diamond concession areas continued. While local or Luanda-based authorities investigated some cases, no arrests were reported.

There were reports of vigilante violence during the year. Between April and July, residents of the Luanda suburb Rocha-Pinto lynched thieves who killed a pregnant woman while stealing her cell phone.

Some media reported that police accepted payments from families of murder victims to execute alleged perpetrators.

There were no further developments in the numerous alleged 2007 or 2006 unlawful killings by police.

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