

# MAKE THE VOTE MEANINGFUL

HUMAN RIGHTS MANIFESTO  
FOR ANGOLA AHEAD OF THE  
2022 GENERAL ELECTION



People protest against the increase in the price of basic goods in Luanda on March 20, 2021. (Photo by Osvaldo Silva / AFP) (Photo by AFP)

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# INTRODUCTION

On 24 August 2022, Angolans will have their fifth general election since 1992 to elect their president and parliamentary representatives.

The Constitution of the Republic of Angola recognises the right to participate in one's political affairs including voting, in two ways: First, by aligning the constitutional human rights protection with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights, and all the international human rights treaties to which Angola is party, notably the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (articles 13 and 26); and second, by declaring explicitly that "[e]very citizen who has attained the age of eighteen years shall have the right to vote and stand for election for any state or local authority body and to serve their terms of office or mandates, under the terms of the Constitution and the law" (article 54.1).

However, to meaningfully exercise their right to vote, Angolans need access to information about who and what they must vote for. To that effect, the right to information, provided in article 40 of the Constitution, is among the necessary

ingredients that render the right to vote meaningful. Informed participation in the conduct of public affairs is the glue that holds together the indivisibility of the right to information and the right to vote. The latter is meaningless without the former. Therefore, in this race, all the participating political parties and candidates have the crucial responsibility to inform the electorate about who they are and what they intend to do once they have been elected into office.

This human rights manifesto is intended to encourage all the Angolan political parties and their candidates in this electoral cycle to provide information to the electorate on what they intend to do, and how, to tackle the following human rights concerns after the election: **(a) humanitarian situation in the southern region, (b) unlawful killings, (c) arbitrary arrests and detention, (d) freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, and (f) economic, social and cultural rights with focus on the right to food, water and health.**





Pictures were taken in the Cuito Cuanavale Municipality, Huila province, Southern Angola.

## A. HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY IN THE SOUTHERN REGION

For more than four years, an extreme drought unseen in four decades has brought devastation in agropastoral communities in southern Angola. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) asserts that the drought is a facet of climate change whose frequency and intensity

increased in southern Africa, among other regions, since the pre-industrial era due to global warming. Further, the IPCC projects more increases in drought frequency and intensity in the region.<sup>1</sup> The projections point to a likely increase of between 1.2 and 3.2°C in mean annual temperature in Angola by 2060 and between 1.7 and 5.1°C by 2090, with faster warming in the interior and eastern areas of the country.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> IPCC, Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse gas fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems: Summary for Policy-makers, August 2019, [ipcc.ch](https://www.ipcc.ch)

Given its semi-arid character, the region is prone to cyclical droughts, which threaten access to water and food production among the agro-pastoralists. The region is neglected and lacks infrastructure for water supply, leaving communities even more vulnerable to droughts. As the current drought continues, it accelerates the scarcity of pastures and water for livestock, which are essential for the economic, social, and cultural reproduction of the communities. Cattle are the basis of pastoralists' wealth in the region, the disappearance of which further weakens the economic, social, and cultural resilience. Thousands of cattle died in the past few years in the south.

Cow milk and its derivatives are central elements of pastoralist diet and identity. Hence their consumption is both for nutrition and cultural expression. Beyond being food, milk is a central thread of the pastoralist sociocultural fabric. This dual function of cow milk—food and culture—is facing existential threat.

Widespread water shortage is a central source of misery among the pastoralists and their families. “The water we drink comes from the *chimpaca*”, said a woman referring to a naturally occurring hole with dirty water unfit for human consumption.

Women and girls spend excessive amounts of time (between 2 to 4 hours) traveling long distances to collect water. The lack of access to sufficient water in the vicinity of their homes also puts at risk their personal safety. In addition, water shortages create the conditions for hygiene-related diseases. When Amnesty International researchers visited the communities, the residents told them that the lack of sufficient and regular water supply also impacted the health of community members. They said that children, in particular, display signs of scabies and skin damage for lack of regular bathing. Consequently, they scratch their skin day and night, often using rocks, until they bleed, to experience momentary relief from itchiness.

Hunger and thirst are driving widespread desertions of villages by men who are young and able to work. Nearly all pastoralist communities in southern Huíla and Cunene were more populated by women, children, and older people —often forced to walk long distances in a search of relief.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Amnesty International research, November-December 2020 and Many-June 2021.





The impact of drought is aggravated by the diversion of grazing land in favour of commercial interests, with little regard for human rights due diligence. The government has permitted commercial farmers and ranchers to occupy communal grazing land and transhumance corridors without consultation, consent, compensation, and environmental impact assessment, in clear violation of procedural, political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights of the pastoralists.<sup>4</sup>

For all these factors, pastoralism in southern Angola is an endangered cultural heritage of humanity.

<sup>4</sup> The end of cattle's paradise: How diversion of land for ranches eroded food security in the Gambos, Angola, 2019.w

# RECOMMENDATIONS

To whichever political party that prevails and forms the government, Amnesty International recommends as follows:

- a) Immediately end the unlawful occupation of communal grazing lands, including intercommunity and transhumance easements, to preserve people's lives, resilience and dignity and the wellbeing of livestock.
- b) Provide immediate, regular, and sustained emergency food assistance and access to safe drinking water for domestic use and consumption in rural areas in Huíla and Cunene provinces.
- c) Adopt a long-term strategy to increase the resilience of rural communities and reinforce their capacity to adapt to climate change risks, including through community-based response strategies to improve food security.
- d) Implement a water collection and storage system in drought-prone areas to ensure continuous and sufficient supply for human consumption and livestock watering.
- e) Coordinate efforts at national, regional, and international levels to mitigate the adverse effects of climate-related risks, monitor population movements in the context of extreme drought and provide durable solutions for displaced people.



## B. UNLAWFUL KILLINGS

Valdo's clothes. Angolan security forces tasked with implementing COVID-19 restrictions are responsible for the killings of people in the country.  
Photo: BiliwaMedia

Unlawful killings continue to be a serious problem in Angola, as security forces use excessive force to crackdown on peaceful protests, killing dozens of protestors. In January 2021, they shot and killed dozens of activists who were peacefully protesting the high cost of living in the mining town of Cafunfo, Cuango municipality, Lunda Norte province. In addition to shooting at peaceful protestors on the streets, the security forces hunted them down in surrounding neighbourhoods and forests. While the exact numbers of those killed and injured remain unknown, reports emerged of bodies dumped in the nearby Cuango river.

Although Lunda Norte province is rich in minerals, its residents live in devastating poverty with poor education, health, transportation, water and sanitation services. To survive, many people, especially youth, practise artisanal mining of diamonds. Some of them have been killed by diamond company security guards over many years.<sup>5</sup> Suspected perpetrators of these killings continue to enjoy impunity for their crimes. Victims continue to be denied access to justice and effective remedies.

<sup>5</sup> Angola, The State of the World's Human Rights, 2021.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

To whichever political party that prevails and forms the government, Amnesty International recommends as follows:

- a) Respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights of everyone to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly
- b) Bring to justice in fair trials all members of the security forces accused on brutality against peaceful protesters and provide access to justice and effective remedies for victims and their families.
- c) Conduct a prompt, thorough, impartial, independent, transparent and effective investigation into the killings in the Lunda provinces and hold those suspected to be responsible accountable in fair trials. Ensure access to justice and effective remedies for victims and their families.

# C. ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTION

In Angola, it is common practice for the authorities to arbitrarily arrest and detain peaceful protestors and community leaders. For example, following the violent repression of a peaceful protest on 8 February 2021, the Serviço de Investigação Criminal (SIC) arrested José Mateus Zecamutchima, the leader of the Lunda Tchokwe Protectorate Movement. Accused of “association with evildoers and armed rebellion” and “leading the rebellion to overthrow the government”, he was subjected to an unfair trial and imprisonment. He has often been denied contact with his lawyer and family.

On 30 May 2021, the police in Cabinda arrested and detained several protestors after violently ending their procession and confiscating their property, including mobile phones and bags. The demonstration was part of a larger five-province protest against hunger, unemployment and the unaffordable cost of living.

TOPSHOT - Police officers beat a protester during an anti-government demonstration in Luanda on October 24, 2020. - Angolan anti-riot police, some mounted on horse backs, tried to break up people as they tried to march to the streets of the capital Luanda in anti-government protests. (Photo by Osvaldo Silva / AP) (Photo by OSVALDO SILVA/AP via Getty Images)



# RECOMMENDATIONS

To whichever political party that prevails and forms the government, Amnesty International recommends as follows:

- a) Fully and effectively respect, protect, promote and fulfil the human rights of everyone including the rights to liberty and peaceful assembly
- b) Immediately end the normalization of arbitrary arrests and detention of peaceful protestors and political activists and hold recalcitrant members of security forces accountable in fair trials. Ensure access to justice and effective remedies for victims and their families.
- c) Immediately release Mr. José Mateus Zecamutchima and other political prisoners and drop bogus charges against them.

# D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

Economic and social crises and human rights violations continue to drive an increase in protests throughout the country. However, security forces have stepped up nationwide operations to prevent them from taking place. Thus, on 21 May 2022, Angolan police prevented two NGOs — Omunga, and Associação para Desenvolvimento da Cultura e Direitos Humanos (ADCDH) — from holding a conference on peace building. The police blocked the entrance to Hotel Maiombe in Cabinda to prevent attendees from entering, saying they were following orders from their superiors.

On 4 February 2021, the police stopped members of the Contestatory Civil Society in Luanda from peacefully protesting to demand political alternatives to the 45-year rule of the government party, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). On 21 August 2021, the police prevented civil society groups from conducting a peaceful protest in Luanda. The groups, who had organized under the consortium United Angola Movement, were peacefully protesting against human rights violations, increasing economic and

social misery, and in favour of the newly announced United Patriotic Front, a union of opposition political parties set to challenge the MPLA in the August 2022 general election.

On 30 August 2021, the police prevented activists from gathering in front of parliament to peacefully protest against the new electoral law under parliamentary debate. On 25 September 2021, they stopped hundreds of Angolan Student Movement members from peacefully protesting against fee increases in public and private secondary and post-secondary institutions.

In an attack on media freedom, the authorities suspended private television channels' licences, while opposition militants prevented journalists from doing their work. On 19 April 2021, the Ministry of Telecommunications, Information Technologies and Social Communication (MINTTICS) suspended the licences of television channels Zap Viva, Vida TV and TV Record Africa Angola, resulting in hundreds of job losses. MINTTICS alleged that these companies were operating



under provisional registrations. The three media companies were taken aback by the suspensions, saying they had not received prior information or notification of any administrative procedure against them.

On 11 September 2021, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) militants prevented TV Zimbo reporters from covering their public protest in Luanda. While the reporters confirmed the incident, they preferred to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

To whichever political party that prevails and forms the government, Amnesty International recommends as follows:

- a) Fully and effectively respect, protect, promote and fulfil the human rights of everyone including the rights to liberty, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly
- b) Immediately repeal all the laws that suppress the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.
- c) Promptly open the space for the independent media and journalists to operate in compliance with the Constitution, free from fear, harassment, intimidation, threats and violence.
- d) Immediately end the use of security forces as a tool to suppress human rights including the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly—social and political activists must be allowed to organize and the carry out their peaceful activities.





## E. ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

The haemorrhaging of public funds into senior government officials' personal bank accounts and their private homes has long undercut the government's ability to fulfil economic and social rights. In June 2021, the General Public Prosecutor announced the arrest of 24 senior military officials of the office of the Head of State Security Affairs, accused of embezzling large sums of funds from state coffers. One of them was arrested at the airport in Luanda, as he tried to leave the country with two suitcases of cash. He reportedly owned a fleet of 15 luxurious vehicles, 51 properties in Angola, Namibia and Portugal, in addition

to boxes and bags found in his apartments which contained AOA10 million, €4 million and US\$1.2 million. Meanwhile, the country's public debt exceeds 100% of the GDP.<sup>6</sup>

### RIGHT TO FOOD

In addition to the famine in the south, throughout the country, people living in poverty and in marginalized communities became severely food insecure and many turned to foraging amongst garbage for food to feed themselves and their families.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

## RIGHT TO WATER

The Constitution of Angola and the Water Law declares that, as a natural resource, water is a public good, the right to which is “inalienable and imprescriptible.”<sup>8</sup>

However, contrary to both this provision and Angola’s international human rights obligations, access to drinking water – in terms of availability, quality and accessibility – remains precarious in both urban and rural areas for large numbers of people. Ironically, as Angolan government fails to supply water to people living in the country, state-owned energy company, Sonangol, signed a letter of intent with German engineering companies to exploit the country’s water catchments to produce hydrogen for Germany’s transition to clean energy.<sup>9</sup>

In rural areas, the development of agribusiness, mining, and oil and gas projects directly hamper access to safe drinking water.<sup>10</sup> The diversion of water courses and obstruction of access to water bodies including rivers, lakes, and springs, by fencing off areas, cuts many people’s access to water.<sup>11</sup> In Lunda Norte, the mining industry has diverted Kwango River away from various communities in Kwango, Xamutemba, and Kapenda Kamulemba municipalities.<sup>12</sup> Commercial farmers

have been allowed to fence off access to rivers, lakes and fountains in Curoca (Cunene), Savate (Kwanganar municipality in Kwando Kubango) and Luangundo (Kwando Kubango).<sup>13</sup> Where natural water sources are still accessible, they are subject to pollution. For example, oil spills in Cabinda and Zaire provinces contaminate water sources, denying communities their rights to water and livelihoods.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Lei de Águas, nº 6/02, de 21 de junho, artigo 5.2: “O direito do Estado relativo às águas, enquanto recurso natural, é inalienável e imprescritível”; Constituição da República de Angola, artigo 95.

<sup>9</sup> Reuters, Angola set to become first supplier of green hydrogen for Germany, <https://www.reuters.com/article/germany-angola-green-hydrogen-idINL6N2Y20AE>, 15 June 2022. GIZ, Green hydrogen as a driver of energy transition, <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/104041.html>, November 2021. DW, Experts urge caution on Angola-Germany green hydrogen deal, <https://www.dw.com/en/experts-urge-caution-on-angola-germany-green-hydrogen-deal/a-62171064>, 16 June 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Amnesty International, Angola: Land, Basic Rights and Freedoms, 1 March 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr12/0185/2019/en>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



In urban areas, the availability, quality and accessibility of water remains precarious for large segments of the population. Drinking water is in short supply and of low quality.<sup>15</sup> In April 2019, the Angolan Public Water Supplier (EPAL) said it was only able to supply on average 500,000 cubic meters of water per day in Luanda, where the real need is over 1 million cubic meters per day for a population of over 6 million people. In Luanda province, the real need is 1.2 million cubic meters of water per day, but EPAL's capacity is only 516,582 cubic meters per day.<sup>16</sup> In addition, water supply is discriminatory with priority given to affluent neighborhoods, whereas those on the peripheries receive their water from mobile vendors at extraordinarily higher prices.<sup>17</sup>

## RIGHT TO HEALTH

Covid-19 and its associated restrictions aggravated the effects of decades of underfunded public(?) services. This was most visible in the health sector, which was on the brink of collapse. A public outcry from the Angola Doctors Union went unanswered. On average, dozens of people died each day in Luanda hospitals alone. According to the Union, despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the most common causes of death remained malaria, malnutrition, acute diarrheal diseases, lack of medicines and, among health workers, overwork. The pandemic's economic and social impact caused a sharp increase in the numbers of sick people using the hospitals that are unable to meet demand.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Fernando Paulo Faria, Water policy in Angola: Some notes on water supplies in Luanda and Benguela, Mulemba: Revista Angolana de Ciencias Sociais 6 (11) (2016), p. 57-83

<sup>16</sup>Folha 8, A falta de água mostra o mau estado deste estado, <https://jornalf8.net/2019/a-falta-de-agua-mostra-o-mau-estado-deste-estado>, 2 April 2019.

<sup>17</sup>Angop, Angola: Expert warns of drinking water quality, [http://www.angop.ao/angola/en\\_us/noticias/sociedade/2016/8/38/Angola-Expert-warns-drinkingwater-quality,4526a43e-9c02-4215-aa28-6549f8d-6fe79.html](http://www.angop.ao/angola/en_us/noticias/sociedade/2016/8/38/Angola-Expert-warns-drinkingwater-quality,4526a43e-9c02-4215-aa28-6549f8d-6fe79.html), 20 Sep 2016. In March 2019, Amnesty International also interviewed civil society representatives from all over the country in Luanda. The problem of water supply in Angola is widely known and acknowledged.

<sup>18</sup>Angola, The State of the World's Human Rights, 2021.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

To whichever political party that prevails and forms the government, Amnesty International recommends as follows:

- a) Take decisive measures to ensure food security and thereby protect and fulfil the right to adequate food for everyone, in terms of availability, accessibility and affordability, without discrimination based including on socioeconomic status.
- b) Take decisive measures to ensure that people living in rural and urban Angola have access to adequate, safe, affordable, and reliable supply of water, without discrimination including based on socioeconomic status.
- c) Invest in the development of a health system capable of providing reliable, accessible, acceptable and good quality healthcare services to all without discrimination based including on socioeconomic status.

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