



**SINCE THE END OF THE COUNTRY'S CIVIL WAR, DEMAND FOR LAND IN LUANDA HAS SOARED. FORCED EVICTIONS HAVE LEFT THOUSANDS OF FAMILIES HOMELESS; AND PUSHED THEM DEEPER INTO POVERTY. THE AUTHORITIES HAVE BEEN VIOLATING THEIR RIGHTS AND IGNORING THEIR VOICES EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.**

The Angolan capital Luanda hosted UN World Habitat Day in October 2008. The same month a construction company forcibly evicted at least 17 families and demolished their homes in the Iraque neighbourhood of the city.

Since 2006, forced evictions have not occurred at the pace or on the scale as they did in the previous five years, but they continue, their impact is profound, and justice and compensation remain elusive for past abuses. Victims of forced evictions see their homes razed to the ground, may be forcibly moved far from their sources of livelihood, and are often left destitute, with even basic needs unattainable.

Amélia André Maneco had just left the hospital after giving birth to her fourth child in July 2005. She returned home to Soba Kapassa, an informal settlement in Luanda, to see a group of police officers and other men gathered. "They told us to remove our property from our homes so they could be demolished," she told Amnesty International. "I asked... why

they were doing this and pleaded with them not to: 'Could it be that there are no laws in this country? You are police. You should protect the law, but you are breaking it.' My husband, Kapassola, was taken by the police and thrown in the back of a car as if he were a sack of potatoes because he told our eldest child not to leave the house. They accused him of *rebelião* [interfering with police duties] and held him at the police station for many hours, but he was not violent when he resisted the demolition."

After their forced eviction, Amélia André Maneco and her husband took the zinc sheets that used to be the roof of their demolished home and built a temporary shelter. But the harassment continued. "They came back two times that year to demolish our homes and try to move us out of the area. They didn't give us any money to move or any place to move to. We asked lawmakers for help and they came to visit us here. The demolitions stopped, but we lived in a zinc shelter until 2008. We could not afford to rebuild a house until then."



**A forced eviction** is the removal of people against their will from the homes or land they occupy, when that removal takes place without legal protections and other safeguards. Not every eviction that is carried out by force constitutes a forced eviction – if appropriate safeguards are followed, a lawful eviction that involves the use of force does not violate the prohibition on forced evictions.

## **FAMILIES LEFT TO FEND FOR THEMSELVES**

Angola emerged from a 27-year civil war in April 2002. Among other benefits, peace has brought new business opportunities and increased foreign direct investment to the country. But these largely positive developments have increased pressure on urban land which was often used for informal settlements, including by internally displaced people who sought refuge around Luanda during the war.

Since the war, reconstruction efforts have created new roads, hospitals, and other



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Amélia André Maneco, speaking to Amnesty International

**Left:** Amélia André Maneco with her daughter, Maria Maneco Kapassola (right) in Soba Kapassa, Luanda 14 January 2009. Her daughter was born by caesarean section two days before their house was demolished in 2005.

**Cover:** A woman outside a makeshift structure in Cambamba II, Luanda, February 2007. This is where she has been living since she was evicted from her home in March 2006.

sorely needed infrastructure, but these projects have had a heavy human cost.

Forced evictions to make way for such development have targeted the poorest neighbourhoods and affected families that are among the least able to assert their rights and seek recourse from the justice system. Left to fend for themselves, families must construct makeshift shelters or share already-overcrowded accommodation with family or friends elsewhere. In some cases, families have been forcibly relocated to areas far from their schools and places of work.

## VOICES IGNORED

Mass evictions around Luanda are typically carried out without prior notice, let alone consultation. In the cases documented by Amnesty International and local human rights groups, police and other government officials carried out forced evictions and house demolitions without eviction orders. Even when families are notified about an eviction, they have no meaningful opportunity to challenge it.

In one case in Luanda’s Cidadania neighbourhood in April 2006, for example, the municipal administration ordered 12 families to vacate their plots within 48 hours. The notice alleged that the families were illegally occupying land reserved by the state for industrial purposes, but it did not explain how the families could refute this. Residents told Amnesty International they had purchased the land from the municipality.

The eviction notice further informed the families that they could move to another parcel of land, but only if they left their homes within the 48-hour period. Residents were not consulted about the selection of the alternate area, in the Bitá Sapu neighbourhood, which had no public transport, schools or water. The Cidadania residents were offered undeveloped plots on which they would have to build new homes, presumably at their own expense. They were not offered any security of tenure, making them vulnerable to forced eviction again.

The following month, a group of 30 police officers, other government officials, and

individuals in civilian clothes demolished these residents’ homes. The May 2006 evictions were only the latest in successive waves of forced evictions in the neighbourhood. In a 20-month period beginning in September 2004, more than 500 families had their homes demolished and were forcibly evicted from Cidadania.

## VIOLENCE FUELS INSECURITY

Members of the National Police or the Armed Forces of Angola (Forças Armadas de Angola) have commonly assisted officials to carry out the evictions. In some instances, private security guards also take part in evictions. Those who carry out evictions typically bulldoze homes and destroy or steal other property.

Members of the police and armed forces, municipal officials, and private security agents may also beat or shoot residents in the course of forcibly evicting them. In a March 2006 forced eviction in Cambamba II, for example, members of the National Police and guards from the private security company Visgo used bulldozers to destroy

200 houses. As demolition began, residents stood in front of their homes and refused to move; some threw stones and other objects. After a short interval, 100 heavily armed riot police arrived, firing into the air and on the ground, and beat and kicked residents leaving a pregnant woman, Aida Cordoso, haemorrhaging after being kicked in the stomach, and a boy of about four shot in the knee.

Amnesty International has documented similar violence in other neighbourhoods. In Cambamba I – on the same day as the violence above – a private security guard shot in a semicircle around the feet of a boy as he tried to flee during the demolition of 130 homes. The guard and seven police officers then surrounded the boy, beat him with a rubber hose, and kicked him. Police and security guards pushed others to the ground saying they were resisting arrest, and beat them, including a woman carrying a baby on her back.

Authorities have at times targeted human rights defenders for no apparent reason other than their support of residents facing forced evictions. Members, in particular of the Angolan housing rights group SOS-Habitat,

have been arbitrarily arrested and subjected to other abuse. During the May 2006 forced evictions in Cidadania, for example, a police officer from the Command of Units for the Protection of Strategic Objectives arrested Rafael Morais, saying his orders were to detain SOS-Habitat activists. Police arrested members Manuel Pinto and Luís Araújo during the March 2006 forced evictions in Cambamba I, confiscated their camera and mobile phone storage chips. They also questioned and threatened staff from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Oxfam, who were observing the evictions and were suspected by police of photographing the events.

## STATE RENEGES ON OBLIGATION TO PROTECT

Government officials often justify forced evictions by claiming houses targeted for destruction are illegally built on land owned by the government and earmarked for development projects. In fact, the legal situation in most cases is not so straightforward. Land use is governed by several sets of laws, and those that deal with urban areas have been only partially implemented.

But Angola does have some very clear international obligations, including to give people adequate notice of any proposed evictions – the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing recommends at least 90 days. Force should only be used when strictly necessary, and then only in a manner that is proportionate to the circumstances.

The government has publicly acknowledged that Angola's land law obliges it to compensate – whether by money, materials or alternative housing and land – those who are subjected to expropriation of land for public interest. But many victims of forced evictions have received no compensation at all.

For too many Angolans, the country's reconstruction and development have meant the destruction of their homes, forced eviction from the lands on which they have built their lives, and being pushed deeper into poverty. Without respect of their human rights, basic services and adequate shelter, without their voices heard and needs met, people find the challenge to secure a livelihood and a future for their families insurmountable.



A woman sitting among the rubble of her home in Cambamba 1, Luanda, in November 2005.

## ACTION NEEDED

### Amnesty International calls on the government of Angola to:

- End all forced evictions.
- Provide immediate assistance, including adequate housing, to those who have been forcibly evicted and who remain homeless, and adequately compensate all victims of forced evictions.
- Ensure that law enforcement officers do not take part in forced evictions or other illegal action, including excessive use of force.
- Ensure that all people who may be affected by evictions are accorded the legal protections to which they are entitled to under international standards, including adequate notice, consultation, due process and assurance of adequate alternative housing.

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