

PUBLIC

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UA 267/06 Arbitrary arrest/ possible prisoner of conscience

ANGOLA Raul Danda (m), journalist and human rights defender

On 29 September, journalist and human rights defender Raul Danda was arbitrarily arrested by members of the Provincial Criminal Investigative Police on his arrival at the airport in Angola's Cabinda province. He has been charged with instigating, inciting and condoning crimes against the security of the state, which carry a penalty of a total of four years' imprisonment. Amnesty International is concerned that he appears to be a prisoner of conscience, arrested solely for his peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression and his membership of banned human rights organization Mpalabanda - Associação Cívica de Cabinda (Mpalabanda – Civic Association of Cabinda).

At Cabinda airport, police officers searched Raul Danda and confiscated documents from his luggage. Apparently the documents contained opinion pieces about the conflict in Cabinda, written by Raul Danda and several other journalists, some of which had already been published in national newspapers in Angola. According to reports, the Provincial Directorate of Criminal Investigation stated that Raul Danda was in possession of documents calling for secession of Cabinda province and containing words "injurious to the President of the Republic."

Raul Danda is being held at the headquarters of the Provincial Criminal Investigation Police in the city of Cabinda. He was brought before the Procurator General on 2 October, well over the 48 hours allowed by Angolan law, but was held uncharged until 3 October. In addition, according to reports, he was refused the assistance of a defence lawyer of his choice, and for the first 24 hours of his detention, he was denied medication for hypertension, a chronic illness which he suffers from. He now has access to this medication.

Mpalabanda - Associação Cívica de Cabinda is the only human rights organization operating in the Angolan province of Cabinda. The organization was created in July 2003, but was banned by the authorities on 20 July 2006, for its alleged involvement in politics. The organization was part of the Cabinda Forum for Dialogue (FCD), which was engaged in peace negotiations with the Angolan government over the long-running conflict in Cabinda. Its banning occurred after Mpalabanda and other members of the FCD refused to recognise the peace agreement signed by a member of the FCD without consulting other members of FCD. Mpalabanda is currently appealing against the decision.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Cabinda is a sliver of land sandwiched between the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Congo Republic. It is internationally recognized as part of Angola and produces most of the country's oil export. However, an armed conflict for secession led by the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (*Frente para a Libertação de Enclave de Cabinda*, FLEC) has occurred in the territory since Angola's independence in 1975. In 2004, FLEC, the Church, and Mpalabanda set up the Cabinda Forum for Dialogue (FCD) to enter into dialogue with the government for peace in Cabinda. Bento Bembe was nominated president of the Forum. On 1 August 2006 Bento Bembe signed a Memorandum of Understanding for Peace and Reconciliation in Cabinda with the Government of Angola on behalf of the FCD. However, both FLEC and Mpalabanda have stated that they no longer recognise Bento Bembe as representative for the Forum.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Portuguese or your own language:

- expressing concern about the arrest of Raul Danda, who appears to be a prisoner of conscience arrested solely for his peaceful political opinions and membership of the Mpalabanda;
- expressing concern that he was held without charge for well over the 48 hours allowed by Angolan law;
- expressing concern that he was initially denied medication for his chronic illness and urging that he has access to medical care as needed;
- seeking assurances that he will not be ill-treated;
- expressing concern that he was not allowed to choose a defence lawyer of his choice and urging that he has access to his family and a lawyer of his own choice

APPEALS TO:

Provincial Procurator General of Cabinda

Exmo. Sr. Pascoal Joaquim

Fax: +244 231 222415

Salutation: Excelência

Procurator General of the Republic

Exmo. Sr. Dr. Augusto da Costa Carneiro

Procurador Geral da República

Procuradoria Geral da República

Rua 17 Setembro

Luanda, República de Angola

Fax: + 244 222 333 170/172

Salutation: Excelência

Minister of the Interior

Sua Excelência General Roberto Leal Monteiro

Ministro do Interior

Ministério do Interior

Avenida 4 Fevereiro No. 106

Luanda, República de Angola

Fax: +244 222 395133

Salutation: Excelência

COPIES TO:

Minister of Justice

Sua Excelência Manuel Aragão

Ministro da Justiça

Ministério da Justiça

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Salutation: Excelência

and to diplomatic representatives of Angola accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 November 2006.