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Angola: ‘Shocking’ footage appears to show appalling abuse of prisoners

Video footage apparently showing Angolan prison guards and fire fighters repeatedly beating and whipping prisoners is shocking and must be investigated, Amnesty International said today.

The footage, recorded on a mobile phone and distributed via social media, is 5 minutes and 39 seconds long and is believed to have been recorded earlier this month. It shows a group of prisoners sitting on the ground as law enforcement officials and fire fighters drag them from the group one-by-one, kick them and beat them with sticks and leather straps.

The footage appears to have been taken in Viana Prison, in the country’s capital Luanda, where similar footage had previously been uncovered.

“This appalling incident involving apparent ill-treatment of prisoners, the second in under a year, is the latest in an increasingly disturbing pattern of brutal conduct by Angolan prison authorities,” said Muluka-Anne Miti, Amnesty International’s Angola Researcher.

In February this year mobile phone footage of prison guards beating prisoners in the same prison was circulated on social media sites. It prompted an official investigation that resulted in the dismissal of the Prison Director, two prison guards and disciplinary measures against 18 other officials at the end of April.

On 27 August the Ministry of the Interior, which is responsible for prisons and law enforcement in Angola, stated that a commission of inquiry would be opened to investigate the recent case.

“Given the recurrence of these incidences, it is clearly not enough that a commission of inquiry is opened into such cases,” said Muluka-Anne Miti.

“The Ministry of the Interior must send a clear message to all officials that such behaviour, including ill-treatment of prisoners, will not be tolerated. Not only disciplinary proceedings, but criminal proceedings must be instituted against officials responsible for such acts.”

Amnesty International further urges the Angolan government to investigate the participation of fire fighters in the beatings of the prisoners.