

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **ANGOLA: Call on Government to end forced evictions and excessive use of force immediately**

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Amnesty International today called on the Angolan government to immediately end forced evictions and excessive use of force that have left thousands of poor and other marginalised communities without shelter or access to health and other basic amenities.

Since November 2005 more than 600 families have been forcibly evicted from their homes in various neighbourhoods of the capital, especially in Bairro Cidadania in Viana municipality and Wenji Maka, Cambamba I and II, Bairro 28 de Agosto, and Banga Wé in Kilamba Kiaxi municipality. On 13 March police and security guards reportedly shot at, beat and kicked residents, including a pregnant woman and a woman carrying a baby on her back, after residents protested against the demolition of their homes. A youth was reportedly beaten by seven police officers and a private security guard and a boy of six or under was shot in the knee. Guards from a private security company took part in the forced evictions to demolish houses and apparently to control a public gathering. However, under Angolan law (Article 4 of Law 19/92 of 31 July 1992) private security companies are prohibited from carrying out police functions. A demolition team accompanied by the police reportedly returned to the evictions site on Wednesday 15 March apparently with the intention of destroying all buildings on the site.

Amnesty International is concerned that the recent mass forced evictions in Luanda, like those carried out in previous years, appear to have been carried out without the procedural protection and due process as required under international standards, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) to which Angola is party. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights the body set up to monitor State parties' compliance with the ICESCR, has defined "forced evictions" as "the permanent or temporary removal against the will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection." Forced evictions have been recognised by the UN Commission on Human Rights as a gross violation of a range of human rights, in particular the right to adequate housing.

Amnesty International is further concerned about the reports of recurring excessive use of force by those carrying out the evictions, particularly in the recent evictions carried out by members of the National Police, Rapid Intervention Police (*Polícia de Intervenção Rápida*) and guards from a private security company in Cambamba I, Cambamba II, Banga Wé and 28 de Agosto, on 13 March. However, no investigations have been carried out into any of the incidents, including those involving the use of firearms, beatings and detention of residents by police officers and security guards.

Amnesty International calls upon the authorities to bring an end to the continuing forced evictions in Angola

and to place a moratorium on mass evictions until such time as a comprehensive human rights-based housing policy and a legal framework providing effective remedies have been adopted. The government must provide assistance to victims of forced eviction who remain without shelter and ensure that the victims have full access to effective remedies to these victims.

The government should institute a thorough, prompt and impartial investigation of the reports of excessive use of force by the police and private security guards. Such investigation, in order to be effective, must be based on international standards, including, in particular, the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and should include collection and analysis of all physical and documentary evidence and statements from witnesses. The conclusions of this investigation must be made public and those suspected to be responsible brought to justice.

## **BACKGROUND**

During the 27-year civil war, which ended in 2002, thousands of families were forced to flee their homes. Many of them came to Luanda where they live in informal settlements without legal title to the land they occupy. Since the war ended, demand for land in Luanda for public and private developments, including high- and middle-income housing, has increased. To facilitate such developments, the authorities forcibly evicted thousands of poor families from their homes.

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566  
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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