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ORAL STATEMENT

**81st Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
17 October – 6 November 2024, Banjul, The Gambia**

Agenda Item 5(i): Activity Report of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and Reprisal in Africa

Honourable Special Rapporteur,

Amnesty International is gravely concerned by the deliberate denial of medical care to prisoners, especially detained human rights defenders and activists, in Angola and Burundi. These intentional acts of cruelty are intended to punish them for their dissent or break their spirit of resistance.

In **Angola**, the health of three activists wrongfully detained for more than a year has drastically deteriorated behind bars. Police arrested the three, Adolfo Campos, Hermenegildo Victor José (known as Gildo das Ruas), and Gilson Morreira (known as Tanaice Neutro), on 16 September 2023 ahead of a planned protest in solidarity with motorcycle taxi drivers. Since then, Amnesty International has documented significant declines in their health amid a pattern of authorities deliberately denying them medical care at multiple different prisons, including urgent surgery. A fourth activist arrested together with the three, Abraão Pedro Santos (known as Pensador) is the only one who has not yet experienced significant health deterioration in prison.

Campos, who entered prison in good health, has gradually lost much of his vision and is now completely deaf in his left ear. In early February 2024, Campos was urgently admitted to the prison hospital, where doctors recommended surgery at an external facility. However, prison authorities blocked that procedure and have yet to respond to a February request from Campos' lawyer for a hospital transfer for surgery.

Gildo has been diagnosed with spinal deviation which prevents him from standing for more than 30 minutes due to pain. A prison doctor prescribed a wheelchair and a lumbar prosthesis for him. His lawyers delivered the wheelchair on 15 August, but he was prevented from using it for at least four days. Tanaice has not been allowed to undergo a scheduled surgery to address a severe and painful condition that has occasionally prevented him from moving his bowels.

Another Angolan activist, Neth Nahara, who is serving a two-year imprisonment, was denied her daily HIV medication for more than eight months since her arrest. She was arrested in August 2023 after she broadcasted a live video on TikTok criticizing President Lourenço.

In **Burundi**, the authorities are deliberately denying medical care to Dr Christophe Sahabo who is currently in pre-trial detention at Ruyigi Prison, approximately 160km from Bujumbura. He was arrested on 1 April 2022 over a dispute regarding the management of Kira hospital and has remained in detention ever since. On 10 September 2024, he vomited and collapsed during a trial hearing. He was admitted to hospital but transferred back to Ruyigi Prison two days later, while still undergoing treatment. His medical condition is serious and potentially life-threatening if he does not receive urgent medical attention.



The deliberate denial of medical care to prisoners has potentially fatal consequences and may constitute a violation to the right to life. Such denial of medical care also causes severe pain and suffering, amounting to torture and other ill-treatment under international law. We call upon the African Commission to urge Angolan and Burundian authorities to urgently grant access to adequate and quality healthcare facilities, personnel and services to human rights defenders and activists held in detention and requesting care.

Thank you.