

URGENT ACTION

THIRTEEN PROTESTERS FREED, FIFTY HELD ARBITRARILY

On 27 February, a judge at the Cabinda Court ordered the provisional release of 13 protesters ruling that their arrest without a warrant was illegal. However, the judge also ruled that the other 50 protesters remain in detention. One female protestor is detained at Yabi prison and 49 male protesters are detained at Cabinda Province civil prison.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Minister of Justice and Human Rights
Francisco Manuel Monteiro de Queiroz
Ministério da Justiça e dos Direitos Humanos
Rua 17 de Setembro,
Luanda, Angola
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Dear Minister Francisco Manuel Monteiro de Queiroz,

I write to you to bring your attention to the case of 50 protesters who remain arbitrarily detained in Angola after a ruling by a judge from the Cabinda Court on 27 February. The judge ruled that their arrest without a warrant was legal as they were arrested while protesting on the streets. Of the 50 protesters, one female is detained at Yabi prison and 49 males are detained at Cabinda Province civil prison. They are being investigated on the crimes of “criminal association” (article 8 of 3/14 Law), “rebellion” (article 21 of 23/10 Law), “insult (ultraje) of the State” (article 25 of 23/10 Law) and “public disturbance and resistance” (articles 185 and 186 of Penal Code).

On the same day, the judge ordered the provisional release of 13 other protesters ruling that their arrest at home without a warrant was illegal.

Angolan security forces arrested 62 protesters, including activists from the Independence Movement of Cabinda (Movimento Independista de Cabinda – MIC) and their family members as well as colleagues between 28 January and 1 February. This is in connection with their involvement in a peaceful protest held on 1 February to mark the 134th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Simulambuco. On 12 February, the police arrested another activist for his involvement in the same peaceful protest.

The crackdown by the authorities on peaceful protesters in Cabinda undermines the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly in Angola. I therefore urge you to:

- *Ensure the immediate and unconditional release of the 50 protesters detained solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly;*
- *Ensure that the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are fully respected and that activists in Cabinda are guaranteed their right to express their views freely without fear of reprisals and unlawful restrictions.*

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Treaty of Simulambuco was signed on 1 February 1885. It gave Cabinda the status of a protectorate of the Portuguese Crown.

On 7 January, the Independence Movement of Cabinda (Movimento Independista de Cabinda – MIC) Secretary sent a communication to the President of the Republic of Angola, João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço and copies to the Provincial Government of Cabinda, the Provincial Police Command, the Public Prosecutor of the Republic, to Angolan political parties and other authorities to inform them about the peaceful protest scheduled for 1 February. The MIC asked for the Angolan Police to be present at the protest to ensure the safety of protesters.

Cabinda is located on 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. Separatist groups have been seeking independence or autonomy from Angola for over 20 years. The Angolan Government's attempts to negotiate with representatives of the Cabindan separatist groups have not been successful.

Angolan security forces arrested eight youth activists from MIC at their homes on 28 January in Cabinda Province, Angola. They were preparing leaflets in readiness for a peaceful protest scheduled for 1 February.

The next day, 20 people, including family members and colleagues of the detained youth activists, were arrested by the police while peacefully protesting to demand their release in front of the Service of Criminal Investigation building also in Cabinda. Protesters took to the streets of Cabinda on 1 February to celebrate the 134th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Simulambuco and to reiterate calls for Cabinda's independence from Angola. They also called for the release of those previously arrested.

Amnesty International is also concerned with the continued excessive use of force by police against protesters and their arbitrary arrests. On 1 March, MIC activists and family members of the 50 detained protesters were preparing a demonstration at the 1st of May square in Cabinda to demand their release. The police arrived before the start of the protest and began to assault the protesters, kicking and punching them. The police arrested 11 people who were released hours later without charge. Seven of the arrested protesters were hospitalized due to the police beatings and returned home on the next day.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Portuguese

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 15 05 2019.

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Cabinda Protesters (They, Their)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr12/9804/2019/en/>