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Angola

Greens/EFA motion for resolution

Tabled by ***Judith Sargentini, Maria Heubuch, Heidi Hautala, Jordi Sebastià, Bart Staes, Michèle Rivasi, Barbara Lochbihler, Ernest Urtasun, Bodil Valero, Igor Šoltes, Davor Škrlec*** *on behalf of the Greens/EFA Group.*

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the revised Partnership Agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Community signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000 (the Cotonou Agreement),

- having regard to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights,

- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

- having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights,

- having regard to the EU-Angola Joint Way Forward document,

- having regard to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders and the Council Conclusions of June 2014 on the 10th anniversary of the EU HRD guidelines, as well as to the EU Guidelines on Freedom of Expression,

-having regard to Article 21 TEU and the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights,

- having regard to the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders,

- having regard to the United Nations Basic Principles for Treatment of Prisoners,

- having regard to the Constitution of Angola,

- having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. Whereas Angola has had a problematic human rights record for years;

B. Whereas the US Department of State listed the following human rights abuses committed in Angola in its 2014 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: cruel, excessive, and degrading punishment, including reported cases of torture and beatings as well as unlawful killings by police and other security personnel; limits on freedoms of assembly, association, speech, and press; official corruption and impunity; arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life, harsh and potentially life-threatening prison conditions, arbitrary arrest and detention, lengthy pre-trial detention, impunity for human rights abusers, lack of due process and judicial inefficiency, infringements on citizens' privacy rights and forced evictions without compensation, restrictions on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), discrimination and violence against women, abuse of children, trafficking in persons, limits on workers' rights, and forced labour;

C. Whereas between 20 and 24 June, police in Luanda arrested 15 activists who had been reading books and peacefully meeting to discuss peaceful political action and governance concerns; whereas they remain in prison without having been formally charged, in solitary confinement and most have not had access to legal counsel; whereas Angolan officials have made allegations that the 15 were plotting a coup without however producing evidence; whereas police have also carried out searches without warrants and seized IT hardware from homes of some of the people they suspected of taking part in the meeting; whereas an additional arrest was made on 30 June: Zenóbio Lázaro Muhondo Zumba, an analyst at the Information and Analysis department attached to the Angolan Armed Forces, was also arrested for appearing in a photograph with an arrested activist;

D. Whereas security forces have violently repressed peaceful protests on 29 July and 8 August, including attacking mothers, spouses and relatives of the detained 15 activists with dogs, beatings and batons in order to disperse the crowd in Luanda on 8 August; whereas several people were briefly detained on both days;

E. Whereas on 28 May, the Luanda Provincial Tribunal condemned the human rights defender and investigative journalist Rafael Marques de Morais to a 2 year suspended prison sentence for "slanderous denunciation" after the publication in 2011 in Portugla of his book Blood Diamonds, which describes human rights abuses and corruption in the context of diamond extraction and traffic; whereas the sentence also ordered the removal of the book from the market within six months, including its online presence, and ordered not to further reprint nor translate it; whereas a Portuguese court had previously dismissed the case;

F. Whereas human rights defender José Marcos Mavungo, known among others for his strong criticism against bad governance in Cabinda, Angola, is currently facing trial on the charge of "rebellion" – a crime against the security of the state - after having been arrested without warrant; whereas the sub-General Prosecutor in Cabinda has just requested a sentence of 12 years' imprisonment which is the maximum penalty allowed by law; whereas throughout the trial, no evidence was presented to support the charges against José Marcos Mavungo;

G. Whereas Cabinda attorney Arão Bula Tempo remains in uncertain legal status following his detention in regards to the Mavungo case; whereas, although he was conditionally released on 13 May, he and his family have been constantly threatened and harassed by local government officials and he is unable to leave the province of Cabinda to seek necessary medical treatment;

H. Whereas four human rights activists and a Radio Deutsche Welle correspondent were detained for over eight hours on July 22 during a visit to Calomboloca prison, Luanda Province, where they were visiting prisoners of conscience jailed the month before;

I. Whereas new legislation was introduced in March 2015 outlining increased control over non-governmental organisations;

J. Whereas all these events, in addition to the absence of serious investigations on reported cases of

attacks and intimidations, point towards an increased harassment by Angolan authorities of human rights defenders;

K. Whereas many people have been forcibly disappeared, killed, arbitrarily arrested and tortured by security forces for speaking out against President José Eduardo dos Santos' 36-year-rule;

L. Whereas Human Rights Watch noted in 2012 that President dos Santos had "faced an unprecedented wave of criticism" in 2011, with growing anti-government protests "[i]nspired by the pro-democracy Arab Spring movements", to which authorities had responded by using "excessive force" and by "curtail[ing] media coverage of the demonstrations;

M. Whereas numerous incidents of political violence, intimidation of protesters, and crackdowns on peaceful demonstrations took place in the run-up to the August 31, 2012, parliamentary elections;

N. Whereas the government frequently makes use of its universal land ownership rights to seize and destroy private homes, sometimes several thousand at a time, without compensating owners fairly;

O. Whereas in 2011 the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict expressed concern over the continued reports of sexual violence against Congolese migrants by Angolan armed forces during expulsions;

P. Whereas nine police officers and 13 civilians were killed in a confrontation when police attempted to arrest the leader of a religious sect called "Luz du Mundo" at Mount Sumi; whereas accounts of the incident claim that hundreds of followers of the sect were killed; whereas the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) urged the Angolan Government to ensure "a truly meaningful, independent, thorough investigation" of this case;

Q. Whereas the Angolan Constitution contains strong language about the protection of freedom of expression, association, and assembly;

R. Whereas hunger and drought represent ongoing problems in Angola and whereas critics associate bad governance and corruption as major reasons for the absence of food security;

S. Whereas exchange of information on Good Governance and Human Rights takes place in a formal political dialogue according to Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement between the EU and Angola at least once a year in the framework of the EU-Angola 2012 Joint Way Forward document;

T. Whereas EU action has for many years not been visible as regards Angola when it comes to observation of political trials, high level meetings, concrete support for HRDs and public statements;

1. Recalls the commitment made by Angola under the Cotonou Agreement – the framework for Angola's cooperation with the European Union – to respect democracy, the rule of law and human rights principles which include freedom of expression, association and assembly, and freedom of the media;

2. Is seriously concerned about the drastically shrinking space for human rights defenders, civil society, freedom of expression, association and assembly in Angola today;

3. Calls on Angolan authorities to ensure in all circumstances the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with international human rights instruments ratified by Angola and national Angolan legal instruments, such as the Angolan Constitution;

4. Calls upon the Angolan government to restore their constitutional rights to the imprisoned political activists, to overturn the politically motivated sentencing of Rafael Marques, and to allow an independent inquiry into the events at Mount Sumi;

5. Expresses its grave concern at the continued detention of José Marcos Mavungo based on unsubstantiated charges brought against him; urges the authorities in Angola to immediately and unconditionally release José Marcos Mavungo and to acquit him; calls on Angolan authorities to drop the charges against Arão Bula Tempo and to allow him to leave the province of Cabinda to seek the medical care he needs, even if he has to leave the country;

6. Calls upon Angolan security forces to immediately stop politically motivated arrests, arrests without warrants, torture, beatings and other forms of inhuman treatment;

7. Calls upon the Angolan government to cease politically motivated legal charges against human rights defenders utilised as a means to silence activists and stifle the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;

8. Calls upon Angolan authorities to guarantee decent detention conditions and cease the practice of long pre-trial detentions, most particularly in solitary confinement;

9. Calls upon the Angolan government to guarantee freedom of expression, association and assembly, and freedom of the media;

10. Welcomes that the Angolan government acknowledged the problems in relation to compensation in case of land seizure and that media reports suggest that the distribution and compensation mechanisms are improving; encourages the government to continue its efforts in this sense;

11. Calls for an independent investigation to take place on the alleged serious human rights violations by Angolan security forces towards displaced Congolese citizens, in particular allegations about sexual abuse;

12. Reminds the EEAS, the EU delegation and EU Member States that in the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights, they have committed themselves to "continue to throw its full weight behind advocates of liberty, democracy and human rights throughout the world";

13. Welcomes that the EU delegation has started observing political trials in Angola, and strongly encourages the delegation to maintain and increase these efforts, while actively engaging with the Angolan authorities on these serious human rights concerns;

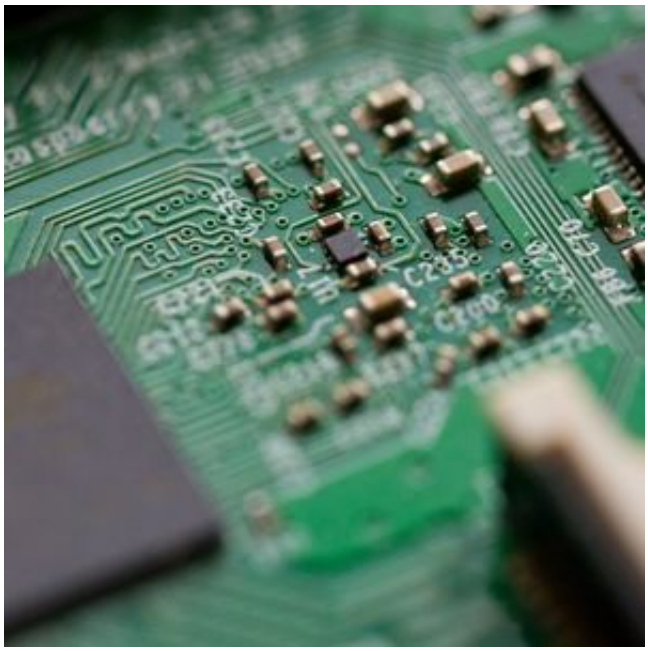
14. Requests the EEAS and Member States to systematically address human rights issues and the restriction of space for human rights defenders and civil society in Angola in its political dialogue with Angola and to ensure that human rights remain on the agenda throughout all EU and Member State relations with Angola;

15. Instructs its President to forward this Resolution to the Council, the European Commission, the VP/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EEAS, the government and the Parliament of Angola.

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