



The State Department web site below is a permanent electro information released prior to January 20, 2001. Please see [y](#) material released since President George W. Bush took office. This site is not updated so external links may no longer func [us](#) with any questions about finding information.

NOTE: External links to other Internet sites should not be c endorsement of the views contained therein.



U.S. Department of State

Angola Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, January 30, 1997.

ANGOLA

The Republic of Angola is in transition from a single party state to a multiparty democracy. The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) has ruled Angola since its independence from Portugal in 1975. The Constitution was revised in 1991 to provide for elections and for guarantees of basic human rights, but the Government does not generally respect its provisions in practice. In 1992 President Jose Eduardo dos Santos received a plurality of the votes in Angola's first elections, which United Nations' (U.N.) observers declared to be free and fair. Pending final resolution of the peace process, the President and the MPLA, backed by the security services, continue to dominate the Government. The judiciary is not independent of the President and the MPLA.

In November 1994, the Government signed the Lusaka Protocol peace accord with the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in an effort to end 20 years of civil war. Under the auspices of the United Nations Angola Peacekeeping Mission (UNAVEM III) and with the help of three observer countries--the United States, Portugal, and Russia--the Government and UNITA continue to implement the Lusaka Protocol's provisions for a cease-fire, withdrawal of forces in contact, disarming and quartering of UNITA forces, integration of some UNITA soldiers into the Angolan armed forces, demobilization of remaining combatants, and creation of a Government of National Reconciliation. In May the National Assembly passed and President Dos Santos signed a blanket amnesty covering all crimes under military as well as civilian law against internal state security committed from May 31, 1991, to May 8, 1996. Passage of this law removed one of the last obstacles to UNITA's integration into Angola's armed forces.

The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for internal security. It exercises this function through the National Police and the paramilitary Rapid Intervention Police created in 1992 as an elite military force. The armed forces are responsible for external security. Prior to implementation of the Lusaka Protocol-mandated cease-fire, they were primarily engaged in fighting the civil war against UNITA. While civilian authorities generally maintain effective control of the security forces, there were frequent instances in which the security forces acted independently of government authority. Members of the security forces committed numerous, serious human rights abuses.

Angola's developing economy, in transition from a centrally directed to a market-based model, has significant potential to exploit extensive natural resource reserves and rich agricultural lands. Principal exports are petroleum and diamonds, which together with foreign aid are the country's leading sources of foreign exchange. Oil revenues for 1996 exceeded \$4 billion and diamond revenues exceeded \$850 million. Subsistence agriculture, the traditional livelihood for the majority of Angola's approximately 12 million citizens, was severely constrained by heavily mined fields and roads as well as by both government and UNITA restrictions on freedom of movement. In 1996 more than 3 million Angolans remained displaced or affected by the war, including 1.2 million who relied on emergency food aid supplied by the international donor community. Areas under government control suffered from hyperinflation, scarcity of consumer goods, massive unemployment and underemployment, and continuing pervasive corruption. While the Government took some measures to increase the availability and control prices of consumer staples, these initiatives did not remedy the root causes of economic instability and are not sustainable. Areas controlled by UNITA experienced scarcities of consumer goods along with massive unemployment and underemployment. Annual per capita gross national product is roughly \$320, but much of the country's wealth remains concentrated in the hands of the small MPLA, military, and business elites. The average monthly salary of wage earners is equivalent to only about \$10 (\$50 to \$100 in the Luanda area), which provides most of the population with a very low standard of living.

Although there was some improvement, the Government's human rights record continued to be poor, and it continued to commit numerous, serious abuses. Members of the security forces committed numerous extrajudicial killings, arbitrarily and secretly arrested and detained individuals, and routinely tortured and beat detainees. The Government did not take effective action to punish abusers. The Government continued to inhibit independent investigations of human rights abuses. Government leaders cited the 20-year civil war to justify allowing emergency considerations to override concerns over human rights abuses. Prison conditions were life threatening. The Government restricted freedom of expression, the press, assembly, and association. While some improvements were made, citizens' freedom of movement continues to be restricted. The judiciary is not independent from the President and the MPLA, and the judicial system does not assure fair trials. Although Angola is nominally a multiparty democracy, citizens have no effective means to change their government. Parliamentary elections due to be held in 1996 were postponed for between 2 and 4 years under the terms of the Lusaka Protocol; presidential elections are to be held when the United Nations determines that appropriate conditions exist. Discrimination and violence against women were widespread. Children and the disabled continued to suffer as a result of the civil war and poor economic conditions. The Government continued to dominate the labor movement, and there was no improvement in the poor worker rights situation.

UNITA human rights abuses in territories under its control included disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detentions, denial of fair public trial, forced conscription, and violations of humanitarian law, including attacks on civilian populations. UNITA also restricted freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association, and movement.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Political and Other Extrajudicial Killing

Politically and economically motivated violence by state security forces and common criminal violence were often indistinguishable. A large number of violent crimes including robbery, vehicle hijackings, assault, kidnaping, rape, and murder were committed by members of the military and police forces both in and out of uniform. Although most criminal activity was committed by poorly and irregularly paid rogue elements of the security forces, there were credible reports that some of these attacks were carried out under orders from the Government. The Government did not take any effective action to punish abusers.

There were credible reports that the Rapid Intervention Police summarily executed people caught in the act of committing crimes. Frequent gun battles between members of the military and police, and fighting among soldiers, police, and bandits in streets, suburbs, and open air markets of major urban centers resulted in numerous civilian casualties.

There were credible reports that many prisoners died as a result of inadequate food and medical treatment (see Section 1.c.).

The 1995 killing of independent journalist Ricardo de Mello remains unsolved, as does the October murder of state-owned television journalist Antonio Casmiro in Cabinda (see Section 2.a.). Similarly the 1994 assassination of the Vice Governor of Malange province remains unsolved. The results of the investigation into the November 1993 death of opposition politician Carlos Simeao were never released. It is widely believed that these persons were killed for political reasons.

UNITA forces continued to kill civilians (see Section 1.g.). It was credibly alleged that dozens of prisoners died in UNITA custody (see Sections 1.c. and 1.d.).

In June private demining companies clearing oil production facilities in Soyo, Zaire province, uncovered a mass grave site. More than 100 bodies were found, and it is likely that many more will be uncovered as demining work progresses. Credible evidence indicates that these killings were committed by UNITA forces during their capture of the city in May 1993. UNAVEM observers have not yet concluded their investigation into this discovery. Given the over 500,000 war and war-related deaths attributed to Angola's 20-year civil war, it is likely that additional mass graves will be discovered.

b. Disappearance

The Government and UNITA continued to accuse each other of abductions and disappearances of civilians. There are reportedly dozens of kidnapings, abductions, and disappearances per month.

There were no developments in the August 1994 disappearances of two individuals associated with Africare, Vincent Douma and Oliveira Lembe. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and U.N. agencies continued searching for them throughout the year.

The ICRC reclassified 78 prisoners of UNITA as "disappeared." There were credible allegations that many of these persons died in UNITA custody.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

There were credible firsthand reports that the police committed torture. Prison officials employed by the Interior Ministry routinely beat accused individuals in Comarca de Viana, a prison on the outskirts of Luanda, to extract information or confessions prior to trial. In many cases the police routinely beat and then released detainees rather than make an effort to prepare a formal court case. Government forces continued to rob and rape civilians (see Section 1.g.).

A Catholic priest who runs an orphanage in Twambo credibly reported that regional Ministry of Justice officials made threats against his life, reportedly because of his alleged sympathies with UNITA.

Prison conditions constituted a threat to the health and life of prisoners. The Government and the National Assembly Committee on Human Rights have acknowledged that conditions are inhuman. Cells are overcrowded and lack basic sanitary facilities. Many prisons, lacking financial support from the Government, were unable to supply prisoners with adequate food and health care. There were credible reports that many prisoners died of malnutrition and