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His Excellency José Eduardo dos Santos
President of the Republic of Angola

Strasbourg, June 10th 2015

Re. Human Rights in Angola

Dear Mr. President,

We, the undersigned, are writing to you to express serious concerns over the worrying and deteriorating human rights situation in Angola.

1. Angolan journalist Rafael Marques de Morais was convicted to a six-month suspended prison for criminal defamation of seven Angolan generals. Mr. Marques de Morais has been unfairly convicted for having exercised his citizenship duties by exposing serious crimes and human rights violations and violators in his book "Blood Diamonds", which could not be printed in Angola but was published in Portugal. This is a matter which has a clear public interest for Angola and for the international community. We take the view that his sentencing violates his right to freedom of expression, as protected by Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which determine that imprisonment is never an appropriate remedy for defamation charges. This view has been confirmed by the December 2014 judgment of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, which ruled in the case of Lohé Issa Konaté v. Burkina Faso that, except in very serious and exceptional circumstances, "violations of laws on freedom speech and the press cannot be sanctioned by custodial sentences." **Since his suspended sentence clearly hampers his human rights work, we urge you to take immediate steps to abolish Angola's criminal defamation laws, which have been used to silence Mr. Marques de Morais' human rights reporting.**

2. We are also concerned about the arrests and judicial harassment of two activists in the province of Cabinda: human rights lawyer Arão Bula Tempo, and José Marcos Mavungo, a human rights defender. They have been charged separately with crimes against the security of the state and risk



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jail sentences of between 10 – 15 years for their involvement in the organisation of a peaceful protest to denounce corruption, human rights violations and bad governance in Cabinda. Human rights defender Arão Bula Tempo was conditionally released pending trial on 13 May after two months of imprisonment. José Marcos Mavungo, arrested and detained on the same day, remains in detention as investigations into his case continue. There are concerns about his health as he suffers from serious cardiac problems and a liver inflammation. Authorities have refused to allow his personal doctor to treat him regularly. He has also been receiving visits from military officers in his cell late at night, for unknown reasons. Two days after his arrest, José Marcos Mavungo was charged with sedition, but later authorities decided to conduct further investigations into his case and amended the sedition charge to rebellion without modifying the facts relating to the crime. **We urge you, therefore, to order the immediate and unconditional release of José Marcos Mavungo, ensure that he is not subjected to any further ill-treatment and is provided with access to doctors and proper health care. In our view, all charges against both human rights defenders should be dropped, as they have been charged solely for their human rights work.**

3. We have heard reports and seen horrific images allegedly from the massacre of hundreds of people killed during a police raid in central Huambo province. The clashes occurred when police raided a camp, looking for religious sect leader Jose Julino Kalupeteka on 16 April 2015. He is accused of inciting civil disorder and is now in police custody. We were told that wounded survivors are now being selectively eliminated by the Police to ensure there remain no witnesses. These allegations are extremely serious and cast an extremely dark image over Angolan authorities. **Therefore we call upon you, Mr. President, as Head of State of the Angolan Republic, to urgently request an international independent investigation into what has really occurred.**

Angola is a partner of the European Union under the Cotonou Agreement, with reinforced political dialogue under the "Joint Way Forward" Agreement. Both treaties include specific obligations and commitments on the respect of human rights and democratic principles. In line with these binding rules, we expect you to act, Mr. President.

Yours sincerely,

Afzal KHAN (S&D)

Ana GOMES (S&D)



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