

# Angola 2023 Human Rights Report

## Executive Summary

There were no significant changes in the human rights situation in Angola during the year.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of arbitrary or unlawful killings; cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by the government; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest or detention; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; political prisoners or detainees; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists, censorship, or enforcement of or threat to enforce criminal libel laws to limit expression; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, including overly restrictive laws on the organization, funding, or operation of nongovernmental and civil society organizations; serious government corruption; extensive gender-based violence, including domestic or intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and child, early, or forced marriage; and prohibiting independent trade unions or significant or systematic restrictions on workers' freedom of association.

The government took credible steps to identify, investigate, prosecute, and

punish officials who may have committed human rights abuses.

Nevertheless, accountability for human rights abuses was limited due to a lack of checks and balances, lack of institutional capacity, a culture of impunity, and government corruption.

## **Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person**

### **a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings**

There were reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings, including extrajudicial killings. Security forces sometimes used excessive force.

In February, Human Rights Watch and investigative journalists reported men identifying themselves as Criminal Investigation Service (SIC) members arrested a group of eight young men in the Luanda suburb of Cacuaco whose bodies were found three days later at a nearby hospital morgue. SIC announced it would investigate the allegations.

### **b. Disappearance**

There were no reports of disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities.

### **c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading**

## **Treatment or Punishment, and Other Related Abuses**

The constitution and law prohibited all forms of torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, but the government did not always enforce these prohibitions.

Periodic reports continued of beatings and other abuses both on the way to and inside police stations during interrogations. The government acknowledged that at times members of the security forces used excessive force when apprehending individuals. Police authorities openly condemned some acts of violence or excessive use of force against individuals and asked victims to report abuses to national police or the Office of the Public Defender.

### **Prison and Detention Center Conditions**

Prison and detention center conditions were harsh and life threatening due to overcrowding, a lack of medical care, corruption, and violence.

**Abusive Physical Conditions:** Prisons had a total capacity for approximately 20,000 inmates but as of June 10, held 24,490 inmates, of which 11,937 were in pretrial detention.

Local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) stated prisons did not always provide adequate services, such as medical care, sanitation, potable water, or food, and it was customary for families to provide food to prisoners.

**Administration:** The government investigated and monitored prison and detention center conditions.

**Independent Monitoring:** The government permitted visits to prisons by independent local observers. Nevertheless, civil society organizations faced difficulties in contacting detainees, and prison authorities undermined civil society work by impeding their ability to enter the prisons.

#### **d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention**

The law prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of persons to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court. The government did not always observe these requirements.

#### **Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees**

The law required a magistrate or judge to issue a warrant before an arrest could be made, although a person caught committing an offense could be arrested immediately without a warrant. Authorities, however, did not always procure warrants before making an arrest.

By law prosecutors were required to inform detainees of the legal basis for their detention within 48 hours. NGO sources reported authorities often did not respect the law. If prosecutors were unable to determine whether there was a legal basis for the detention within 48 hours, prosecutors had the authority to release the person from detention. Depending on the

seriousness of the case, prosecutors were permitted to require the detained person to submit to one or more pretrial procedures prescribed by law, such as posting bail, periodic appearance before authorities, or house arrest.

If prosecutors determined a legal basis existed for the detention, a detained person could be held in pretrial detention for up to four months without charge and up to 12 months before a judge was required to rule on the matter. Cases of special complexity regarding crimes for which conviction was punishable by eight or more years allowed for pretrial detention without charge for up to six months, and up to 14 months before a judge was required to rule on the case. By law, the period of pretrial detention counted as time served in fulfillment of a sentence of imprisonment.

The law stated all detainees had the right to a lawyer, either chosen by them or appointed by the government on a pro bono basis. There was an insufficient number of lawyers to handle the volume of criminal cases, and the lack of lawyers in certain provinces, particularly outside the capital, at times impeded the right to a lawyer. When a lawyer was unavailable, a judge could appoint a clerk of the court to represent the defendant, but clerks of the court often lacked the necessary training to provide an adequate defense. A functioning but ineffective bail system, widely used for minor crimes, existed. Prisoners and their families reported prison officials demanded bribes to release prisoners.

The law allowed family members prompt access to detainees, but prison

officials occasionally ignored this right or made it conditional upon payment of a bribe. The law allowed detainees to be held for up to 48 hours before being presented to a public prosecutor, during which time they could communicate with their lawyer or a family member. There were instances in which lawyers were not allowed to communicate with detainees during the 48-hour period.

**Arbitrary Arrest:** According to several NGO and civil society sources, police arbitrarily arrested individuals without due process and routinely detained persons who participated, or were about to participate, in antigovernment protests, although the constitution protected the right to protest.

Protesters were at times charged with crimes such as public order offenses, or insulting state entities, but most often, detained protesters were released after a few hours without charges. In September, police arrested seven activists in Luanda under charges of insulting the president while planning a protest against proposed restrictions on motorcycle taxi operations.

Activists Adolfo Campos, Gilson da Silva Moreira, Hermenegildo Andre, and Abraao Pedro Santos were convicted and sentenced to 29 months' imprisonment. The lawyer for the activists stated the charges were unjust and were meant to intimidate political dissidents. The visible presence of security forces was often enough to deter significantly what the government deemed unlawful demonstrations. In certain cases, members of groups organizing protests were arrested at their homes prior to the protest.

**Pretrial Detention:** Excessively long pretrial detention continued to be a serious problem. An inadequate number of judges and poor communication among authorities contributed to the problem. Many prisoners were held in pretrial detention longer than permitted under law, which ranged from four to 14 months depending on the severity and complexity of the alleged crime. In some cases, authorities held inmates in prison for up to five years in pretrial detention. The length of pretrial detention at times equaled or exceeded the maximum sentence for the alleged crime. The government often did not release detainees confined beyond the legal time limit, claiming previous releases of pretrial detainees had resulted in an increase in crime.

### **e. Denial of Fair Public Trial**

The constitution and law provided for an independent and impartial judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence and impartiality. The judicial system was affected by institutional weaknesses, including political influence in the decision-making process.

The national police and the Angolan Armed Forces had internal court systems that generally remained closed to outside scrutiny. Although members of these organizations could be tried under their internal regulations, cases that included violations of criminal or civil law could also fall under the jurisdiction of provincial courts. Both the Attorney General's

Office and the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights had oversight responsibilities over military courts.

## **Trial Procedures**

The constitution and law provided for the right to a fair and public trial, and the judiciary generally enforced this right.

At times, authorities did not inform defendants of the charges against them in detail within 48 hours of their detention as required by law. There were long trial delays at the Supreme Court, in part because it remained the only appellate court for much of the country. No appellate courts were created during the year. According to the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, all public defenders were licensed lawyers, but at times, especially in rural locations, defendants were represented by clerks of the court due to lack of availability of lawyers. Defense lawyers did not always have access to prosecution files and evidence in a timely manner to prepare a defense. Defense lawyers were not always provided with adequate facilities to prepare case work.

A separate juvenile court heard the cases of children between ages of 12 and 16 accused of committing a criminal offense. Children older than 16 accused of committing a criminal offense were tried in regular courts. In many rural municipalities, there was no provision for juvenile courts, so offenders as young as 12 could be tried as adults.



## **Political Prisoners and Detainees**

There were reports of political prisoners and detainees. On June 16, activists Paulo Clemente and Gregório Filipe were detained by police after having allegedly released social media videos calling for public participation in a protest march in Luanda on June 17. They were held for nearly a week with no charges filed.

In January 2022, Luther Campos “King” was arrested at home without a warrant, accused of playing a role in a motorcycle taxi strike that month that resulted in property damage. In February, he was convicted of inciting public disorder, received a 22-month sentence, and was granted release for health reasons.

### **f. Transnational Repression**

Not applicable.

### **g. Property Seizure and Restitution**

The government evicted persons from their places of residence or seized their property without due process or adequate restitution. On February 27, residents living in 300 houses in the Luanda suburb of Zango 3, Viana, reported they were evicted without warning by national police and their homes were subsequently destroyed, not allowing them time to retrieve belongings. Residents claimed they had lived there as long as seven years.

Government sources told media the residents had built on land reserved for a public works project. Documenting land ownership often took years to complete, resulting in many residents not having a clear title to the land or home they had lived in for many years. Additionally, squatting was a common occurrence, especially in urban areas, further complicating the problem.

## **h. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence**

The constitution and law prohibited such practices, but the government did not always respect these prohibitions. Civil organizations and politically active individuals, including government critics, members of opposition parties, and journalists, alleged the government monitored their activities and membership on social media and used spyware to monitor their whereabouts and telephone conversations. These groups also frequently complained of threats and harassment based on their affiliations with groups that were purportedly or explicitly critical of the government. In June, Freedom House reported the government's ability to monitor and intercept data and communications without adequate oversight was a major concern, particularly among human rights activists and journalists.

Government sources denied conducting telephone or internet surveillance without legal authorization.

## Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties

### a. Freedom of Expression, Including for Members of the Press and Other Media

The constitution and law provided for freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, but the government did not always respect this right.

**Freedom of Expression:** Individuals were increasingly able to use private media and social media platforms to openly criticize government policies and practices. Individuals reported practicing self-censorship but generally were able to criticize government policies without fear of direct reprisal. Social media was widely used in the larger cities and provided an open forum for discussion. Activists reported the government increasingly used a law which prohibited “insult against the State, its symbols and entities” to suppress freedom of expression.

In August, a social media influencer was sentenced to six months’ imprisonment for insulting the president in a video posted to TikTok. In October, the public prosecutor’s office petitioned the court to raise the sentence to two years’ imprisonment. Media reported the influencer had posted videos regarding other politicians on social media networks in the months leading up to her arrest.

In September, four activists were sentenced to two years and five months in prison for conviction of insulting the president during a protest against traffic regulations. One of the activists, Tanaice Neutro, had previously been convicted in 2022 under the same law.

**Violence and Harassment:** Reporting on corruption, poor governance, and human rights abuses were the primary reasons for attacks against journalists, which often occurred with impunity. Journalists reported more incidents of violence, harassment, and intimidation than in 2022.

**Censorship or Content Restrictions for Members of the Press and Other Media, Including Online Media:** Private television media outlets seized by the state in 2020 due to corruption investigations remained under government control. On September 5, a spokesperson for the government's Privatization Program announced that two media outlets –TV Zimbo and the Media Nova group (Multitel, Angola Telecom, and TVCabo) – were to be privatized via public tender, at a time yet to be determined. The president appointed the leadership of all major state-owned media outlets, and state control of these outlets often led to one-sided reporting. State news outlets, including Angolan Public Television, Radio Nacional, and the *Jornal de Angola* newspaper, strongly favored the ruling party and often did not cover social problems reflecting poor governance or views critical of the government. Journalists working for government-controlled outlets reported threats of job losses if they did not comply with the editorial

narrative of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) party.

In March, the online news platform *Camunda News* suspended operations citing continuing pressure from the SIC including threats of arrest related to allegations the platform was operating illegally.

The Regulatory Entity for Social Communication (ERCA) was a body composed of 11 counselors designated by political parties represented in the parliament, the government, and journalists. ERCA's responsibility was to safeguard press freedom and lawful media activity and to issue regulations and decisions on those matters. Journalists and opposition political parties criticized ERCA for being controlled by the ruling MPLA and for issuing regulations that favored the government.

The Ethics and Credentialing Commission was a body exclusively composed of journalists that was authorized to license and delicense journalists. Media outlets allowing a journalist to work without credentials faced a fine of approximately 23,100 kwanza (\$356), which was approximately a journalist's monthly salary.

The minister of social communication, the spokesperson of the presidency, and the national director of information maintained significant decision-making authority over media. Members of media said these individuals actively vetted news stories in the state-controlled print, television, and

radio media and exercised considerable authority over some privately owned outlets.

**Libel/Slander Laws:** Defamation was a crime punishable if convicted by imprisonment or a fine. Unlike cases in which defendants were presumed innocent until proven guilty, defendants in defamation cases had the burden of proving their innocence by providing evidence of the validity of the allegedly damaging material.

Several print media, radio, and political blog journalists faced libel and defamation lawsuits. Journalists complained the government used libel laws to limit their ability to report on corruption and nepotistic practices, while the government stated some journalists abused their positions and published inaccurate stories regarding government officials without verifying the facts or providing the accused with the right of reply. In September, a Luanda District court judge charged journalist Liberato Pereira Furtado, a reporter for privately owned Radio Luanda, with defamation, slander, and false statements stemming from a 2020 news report prosecutor Elizete Francisco had misappropriated government funds of more than 16.5 million kwanza (\$25,000) to her personal account. Furtado's court case continued at year's end.

## **Internet Freedom**

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor

online content.

## **b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association**

The government limited the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association.

### **Freedom of Peaceful Assembly**

The constitution stated, “Freedom of assembly and peaceful, unarmed demonstration shall be guaranteed to all citizens, without the need for any authorization.” The law required written notification to the local administrator and police three days before public assemblies could be held. The law did not require government permission to hold public assemblies, but it permitted authorities to restrict or stop assemblies in public spaces near military, detention, or diplomatic buildings for security reasons, and limited protests to start after 7 p.m. on weekdays and 1 p.m. on Saturdays.

The government permitted demonstrations, including antigovernment protests, but at times prohibited events based on perceived or claimed security considerations. Police and administrators did not interfere with progovernment gatherings. Politically unaffiliated groups intending to criticize the government or government leaders often encountered the presence of police who prevented them from holding their events or limited their march routes. In such cases, authorities claimed the timing or venue requested was problematic, proper authorities had not been notified, or

those protests put social stability and security at risk.

On January 28, national police in Luanda halted a peaceful political march that included four members of the National Assembly, reportedly using tear gas and batons to disperse the crowd, resulting in 17 injuries. Hours apart, police halted another unrelated march before it began, arresting activists planning a march in support of political prisoners and treatment of women merchants. Both groups claimed they had informed the government in advance.

On June 17, demonstrations occurred across every province in the country against an increase in fuel prices, restrictions on street vending, and a proposed law limiting NGOs and introducing government oversight. Government authorities initially allowed the demonstrations, but in some cases authorities used harsh tactics to disperse crowds or prevent them from marching.

## **Freedom of Association**

Extensive delays in the NGO registration process continued to be a problem. NGOs that had not yet received registration were allowed to operate. At times the government arbitrarily restricted the activities of associations it considered subversive by refusing to grant permits for projects and other activities. Authorities generally permitted opposition parties to organize and hold meetings. In May, the government introduced in the National



Assembly a draft law regulating NGOs, which generated strong opposition from NGOs and activists, claiming it would impose arbitrary restrictions on the independence and autonomy of NGOs, impeding freedom of association, and could be used to ban outright or limit activities of NGOs perceived to be critical of the government. The law was pending passage at year's end.

### **c. Freedom of Religion**

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

### **d. Freedom of Movement and the Right to Leave the Country**

The constitution and law provided for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation. The government at times restricted these rights.

**In-country Movement:** Document checkpoints in domestic airports and on roads throughout the country were common. Reports by local NGOs suggested that, despite an incremental drop in cases, some police officers continued to extort money from civilians at checkpoints and during regular traffic stops. Reports from the diamond-mining provinces of Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul stated some government agents restricted the movements of

local communities.

## **e. Protection of Refugees**

The government generally cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, returning refugees, and asylum seekers, as well as other persons of concern.

**Access to Asylum:** The law provided for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government had established a system for providing protection to refugees. The law provided specific procedures for the submission of an asylum application and guidance on the determination of refugee status. Changes to the law in 2015 authorized the creation of reception centers for refugees and asylum seekers where they would receive assistance until the government decided on their cases; however, the reception centers were not yet established. The government began registration of refugees and asylum seekers in July, issuing refugee identity cards for the first time since 2015, giving refugees proof of legal residence and better access to participation in the formal economy.

**Freedom of Movement:** UNHCR, NGOs, and refugees reported restrictions on freedom of movement in Lunda Norte Province. Refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo also reported periodic restrictions on freedom of movement from their resettlement site in Lovua, Lunda Norte

Province.

**Employment:** There were reports the government imposed restrictions on refugees' ability to work, but refugee registration could alleviate restrictions, once fully implemented. Authorities reportedly continued to harass asylum seekers and refugees working in the informal economy.

**Access to Basic Services:** Persons with recognized refugee status could at times obtain public services. UNHCR, NGOs, and refugees, reported urban refugees faced difficulty accessing public services such as health care and education, largely due to lack of proper identification.

## **f. Status and Treatment of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)**

Not applicable.

## **g. Stateless Persons**

The government estimated there were more than 10 million unregistered citizens in the country. Children of undocumented foreign parents born in the country were at risk of statelessness due to their parents' inability to register their births. The government during the year continued its birth registration program seeking to address this problem.

## **Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political**

## Process

The constitution and law provided citizens the ability to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage.

## Elections and Political Participation

**Abuses or Irregularities in Recent Elections:** The August 2022 national elections were generally reported to be free of abuses, but observers noted media access and coverage, as well as institutional advantages, heavily favored the ruling party, and opposition parties complained of perceived irregularities during the provincial-level vote count. Local government elections – promised for more than a decade – remained unscheduled pending the completion of a final legislative package.

Opposition parties criticized the slow rollout of registration centers in rural areas, changing locations of polling stations, and the presence of deceased voters remaining on the rolls. Domestic and international observers reported polling throughout the country was peaceful, orderly, and generally well organized, but they criticized the lack of political independence of the National Electoral Commission (CNE) and its failure to publish voter rolls 30 days prior to election day. Opposition parties complained to the Constitutional Court regarding aspects of the electoral process, including the CNE's lack of transparent decision making on key

election procedures and perceived irregularities during the provincial-level vote count.

**Political Parties and Political Participation:** The ruling MPLA party dominated all political institutions, giving its members advantages in obtaining civil service and government leadership jobs. Opposition parties asserted government control of most media outlets favored the MPLA. There were reports of traditional leaders in rural areas limiting political participation to a single party. By law, no political party was permitted to limit party membership based on ethnicity, race, or gender. This law was generally followed by all parties.

## Section 4. Corruption in Government

The law provided criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented the law effectively. The government dismissed and prosecuted midlevel officials for petty corruption. There were numerous reports of government corruption during the year.

**Corruption:** In May, the government approved a five-year *National Strategy for the Prevention and Repression of Corruption*, but corruption investigations in high levels of the judiciary contributed to skepticism by some analysts regarding the government's commitment to addressing corruption. In March, Court of Auditors Chief Justice Exalgina Gamboa resigned following her indictment on suspicion of embezzlement and

corruption; and the Attorney General's Office opened an investigation into President of the Supreme Court Joel Leonardo for suspicion of involvement in embezzlement, extortion, and corruption. The investigation of Leonardo continued at year's end. Despite these investigations, activists charged corruption complaints involving high-level government personnel and their families were often not investigated.

For additional information concerning corruption in the country, please see the Department of State's *Investment Climate Statement* for the country, and the Department of State's *International Narcotics Strategy Control Report*, which includes information on financial crimes.

## **Section 5. Governmental Posture Towards International and Nongovernmental Monitoring and Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights**

A variety of domestic and international human rights groups operated throughout the country, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights. Government officials were somewhat cooperative and responsive to the views of these groups. Some groups investigating government corruption and human rights abuses alleged government interference in their activities, particularly in provinces outside of Luanda.

The law required NGOs to specify their activities and geographic areas of

activity. The government used this provision to prevent or discourage established NGOs from engaging in certain activities, especially those that the government deemed politically sensitive.

The government allowed local NGOs to carry out human rights-related work, but many NGOs reported they were forced to limit the scope of their work because they faced problems registering, were subjected to subtle forms of intimidation, and risked more serious forms of harassment and closure.

**Government Human Rights Bodies:** The state-funded Interministerial Commission for the Writing of Human Rights Reports included representatives from various government ministries. Leading civil society members decided not to participate on the commission because they did not believe the commission was independent or effective.

The 10th Commission on Human Rights of the National Assembly was charged with investigating citizen complaints of alleged human rights abuses and made recommendations to the National Assembly.

An Office of the Ombudsman, with national jurisdiction, mediated between an aggrieved public party, including prisoners, and an offending public office or institution. It had neither decision-making nor adjudicative powers, however, but helped citizens obtain access to justice, advised government entities on citizen rights, and published reports.

## Section 6. Discrimination and Societal Abuses

### Women

**Rape and Domestic Violence:** Rape, including spousal rape and intimate partner rape, was illegal and punishable by up to 12 years' imprisonment if convicted, depending on aggravating situations. The government did not enforce the law effectively. Limited investigative resources, poor forensic capabilities, and an ineffective judicial system prevented prosecution of most cases. A 2021 study conducted by the NGO Mosaiko stated 53 percent of women in rural communities and urban peripheries did not report domestic violence to civil authorities, and even sexual abuse of adolescents was often addressed by the village leaders and not reported to police. Only aggravated rape cases with severe injuries and rape of children were reported to police. The Ministry of Justice and Human Rights worked with the Ministry of Interior to increase the number of women police officers and to improve police response to rape allegations.

The law criminalized domestic violence and penalized convicted offenders with prison sentences of up to eight years and monetary fines, depending on the severity of their crime. The Ministry of Justice and Human Rights maintained a program with the Angolan Bar Association to give free legal assistance to women survivors of domestic abuse and established counseling centers to help families.



In August, a girl, age 15, was sexually abused and allegedly killed by her former boyfriend and another man in Luanda. Police investigated the crime and apprehended the two suspects.

**Other Forms of Gender-based Violence or Harassment:** Sexual harassment was common and not illegal. It could be prosecuted, however, under assault and battery and defamation statutes, but prosecutions were rare.

**Discrimination:** The constitution and law provided for the same legal status and rights for women as for men. The government, however, did not enforce the law effectively, and societal discrimination against women remained a problem, particularly in rural areas. Customary law prevailed over civil law, particularly in rural areas, and at times had a negative effect on a woman's legal right to inherit property.

The law provided for equal pay for equal work, although women generally held lower-level positions, were more likely to be excluded from the formal labor market, and generally received lower pay than men. There were legal restrictions on women's employment in occupations and industries compared with men, including in jobs deemed hazardous, factory jobs, and those in the mining, agriculture, and energy sectors.

**Reproductive Rights:** There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities.

Persons living in rural areas faced more barriers to access of sexual and

reproductive health services and postabortion emergency services than urban dwellers due to a lack of resources and health programs in those areas. Cultural views, such as that women had a responsibility to bear children, and religious objections to using contraception, limited access to reproductive health services. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported there were four nursing and midwifery personnel per 10,000 inhabitants in the country (2010-18 data). For survivors of sexual violence, the law on domestic violence provided for legal and medical assistance, access to shelter spaces, and priority care assistance to obtain legal evidence of the crime. Emergency contraception was available as clinical management of rape.

According to a 2020 WHO report, the country's maternal mortality rate was 222 deaths per 100,000 live births, a significant reduction from the rates of 431 deaths in 2007 and 827 deaths in 2000. High maternal mortality was due to inadequate access to health facilities before, during, and after giving birth, a lack of skilled obstetric care, and early pregnancy. According to WHO data, the adolescent birth rate was 163 births per 1,000 women between ages 15 and 19. A UN Population Fund report reported six of 10 teenage girls who abandoned school did so due to pregnancy. According to 2010-19 data, 30 percent of women of reproductive age had their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods. UNICEF reported 50 percent of births in the country were attended by skilled health personnel in 2016.

According to an official in the Ministry of Public Administration, Labor, and Social Security, lack of running water and sanitary facilities at some schools disproportionately affected teenage girls, causing them to not attend school during their menstrual periods. The cumulative effect of lost class time was detrimental to their success in school, leading struggling students to drop out and enter the work force.

## **Systemic Racial or Ethnic Violence and Discrimination**

The law contained several provisions that criminalized discrimination based on skin color, race, and ethnicity. Reports of racial or ethnic violence were rare.

## **Children**

**Birth Registration:** Although birth registration was universalized, the government did not register all births immediately, which blocked access to government services including education beyond sixth grade.

**Education:** There were reports parents, especially in rural areas, were more likely to send boys to school than girls. According to UNESCO, enrollment rates were higher for boys than for girls, especially at the secondary level. The NGO Mosaiko reported girls dropped out at higher rates than boys due to insecure school environments, sexual abuse, stigma derived from early pregnancies, and the need to travel long distances to school exposing girls to

sexual violence.

**Child Abuse:** There were laws against child abuse, but they were rarely enforced. Child abuse was widespread. Reports of physical abuse within the family were commonplace, and local officials largely tolerated abuse due to lack of capacity within institutions to provide appropriate care. The Ministry of Social Action, Family and Women's Promotion offered programs for child abuse victims and other vulnerable children, but nationwide implementation of such programs remained incomplete.

**Child, Early, and Forced Marriage:** The legal age for marriage with parental consent was 15 for girls and 16 for boys. The government did not enforce this restriction effectively, and the traditional age of marriage in lower income groups coincided with the onset of puberty.

**Sexual Exploitation of Children:** The law prohibited the sale or use of children for commercial sexual exploitation. Police did not actively enforce laws prohibiting commercial sexual exploitation, and local NGOs expressed concern regarding the sexual exploitation of children. The law prohibited the use of children to produce pornography; however, it did not prohibit the procuring or offering of a child for the production of pornography, or the use, procuring, or offering of a child for pornographic performances.

Sexual relations between an adult and a child younger than 12 were considered rape, and conviction carried a potential penalty of eight to 12

years' imprisonment. Adult sexual relations with a child between ages of 12 and 17 were considered sexual abuse, and convicted offenders could receive sentences from two to eight years in prison. The legal age of consensual sex was 18. Limited investigative resources and an inadequate judicial system prevented prosecution of most cases. There were reports of prosecutions during the year.

## **Antisemitism**

There was a Jewish community of approximately 350 persons, primarily resident Israelis. There were no known reports of antisemitic incidents.

## **Trafficking in Persons**

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

## **Acts of Violence, Criminalization, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Expression, or Sex Characteristics**

**Criminalization:** There were no laws against consensual same-sex sexual relations.

**Violence and Harassment:** Local NGOs reported lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) persons faced violence and

harassment, and police often tolerated violence against LGBTQI+ individuals or against those reporting abuse, even failing to investigate or prosecute perpetrators.

**Discrimination:** The law explicitly prohibited discrimination by state and nonstate actors based on sexual orientation, and implicitly by gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics. LGBTQI+ persons rarely reported incidents to police, however, and when reported, LGBTQI+ persons asserted police sometimes refused to register the grievances. The law did not recognize LGBTQI+ couples or their families. LGBTQI+ NGOs asserted societal biases against LGBTQI+ identity resulted in discrimination in education, employment, family life, health services, and housing. LGBTQI+ persons reported leaving school before graduating because of discrimination by teachers and classmates.

**Availability of Legal Gender Recognition:** Legal gender recognition was not available.

**Involuntary or Coercive Medical or Psychological Practices:** Involuntary or coercive medical or psychological practices specifically targeting LGBTQI+ individuals occurred but were not well documented.

**Restrictions of Freedom of Expression, Association, or Peaceful Assembly:** There were no legal restrictions on freedom of expression, association, or peaceful assembly placed on LGBTQI+ groups, some of which had legal

recognition as NGOs in the country.

## **Persons with Disabilities**

Persons with disabilities did not have access to education, employment, health services, public buildings, and transportation on an equal basis with others. The law required such access, but disability rights groups reported the law was largely unenforced. The government provided information and communication on disability concerns in accessible formats.

The law prohibited discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities, but the government did not effectively enforce these prohibitions. The constitution granted persons with disabilities full rights without restriction and called on the government to adopt national policies to prevent disability; treat, rehabilitate, and integrate persons with disabilities; support their families; remove obstacles to their mobility; educate society regarding disability; and encourage learning and training opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The law also instituted a quota system to encourage the public and private sectors to employ more persons with disabilities, with the public-sector quota set at 4 percent of total employees and the private-sector quota at 2 percent. The government official responsible for overseeing programs to promote inclusion for persons with disabilities acknowledged both the private and public sectors failed to meet the quota system established by

law. Persons with disabilities included more than 80,000 survivors of land mines and other explosive remnants of war. Because of limited government resources and uneven availability, only 30 percent of persons with disabilities were able to take advantage of state-provided services such as physical rehabilitation, schooling, training, or counseling.

Women with disabilities were reported to be vulnerable to sexual abuse and abandonment when pregnant. The Ministry of Social Assistance sought to address problems facing persons with disabilities, including veterans with disabilities, and several government entities supported programs to assist individuals with disabilities that were caused by landmine incidents.

Government inaction to enforce these laws limited the ability of persons with disabilities to participate fully in civil life. Accommodations were made in the August 2022 national elections, however, to assist persons with disabilities to fully participate.

## **Other Societal Violence or Discrimination**

Discrimination against those with HIV and AIDS was illegal, but lack of enforcement allowed employers to discriminate against persons with HIV. There were no media reports of violence against persons with HIV. Reports from local and international health NGOs suggested discrimination against persons with HIV was common. The government's National Institute to Fight HIV and AIDS included sensitivity and antidiscrimination training for its



employees who tested and counseled HIV patients.

## **Section 7. Worker Rights**

### **a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining**

The law provided for most workers to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. The law prohibited some forms of antiunion discrimination but did not explicitly prohibit employer interference with union activity. The law did not permit members of the armed forces, police, firefighters, members of sovereign bodies, and public prosecutors to form and join independent unions or initiate strikes.

The government did not always enforce laws protecting freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the right to strike for workers. Government approval was required to form and join unions which limited participation. Labor unions, independent of those run by the government, worked to increase their influence, but the ruling MPLA party dominated the labor movement because of its historical close relationship with labor unions and from the strong financial base of the nation's largest union, of which the MPLA party was a part. The government labelled many workers "essential," beyond those sectors defined as essential by the International Labor Organization, including the transportation, communications, waste

management, and fuel distribution sectors, making them ineligible for collective bargaining.

The government and employers at times employed practices that limited or violated these rights by replacing striking workers and using threats of violence to end strikes.

## **b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor**

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

## **c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment**

See the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/findings/>.

## **d. Discrimination (See section 6)**

## **e. Acceptable Conditions of Work**

**Wage and Hour Laws:** A minimum wage for the formal sector existed and varied by sector. The minimum general monthly wage of 32,181.15 kwanza (\$49) was less than the daily poverty rate of \$2.15. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights raised concerns regarding the wide

disparities of minimum wage by sector and the possibility this might undervalue work in women-dominated sectors. The lowest minimum wage was for agricultural work and was set below the UN Development Program's official line of poverty. The minimum wage for the formal sector could be updated annually or when the government assesses economic conditions warrant. The minimum wage law did not cover workers in informal sectors, such as street vendors and subsistence farmers.

The standard workweek in the private sector was 44 hours and in the public sector 35 hours. In the formal sector, there was a prohibition on excessive compulsory overtime, defined as more than two hours a day, 40 hours a month, or 200 hours a year.

**Occupational Safety and Health:** Occupational safety and health (OSH) standards were required for all main industries in the country. Employees had the right to remove themselves from hazardous working conditions without jeopardizing their employment.

**Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement:** The government effectively enforced the minimum wage law within the formal labor sector, and penalties were commensurate with those for similar infractions. Penalties were sometimes applied against violators. The Ministry of Public Administration, Labor, and Social Security was charged with implementing and enforcing labor law. An insufficient number of adequately trained labor inspectors hampered enforcement efforts. Inspectors had the authority to conduct unannounced

inspections and initiate sanctions, but some companies received advance warning of impending labor inspections. The government did not always proactively enforce occupational safety and health standards nor investigate private company operations unless complaints were made by NGOs and labor unions.

As much as 80 percent of the workforce (approximately nine million persons) was employed in the informal economy. The rate was higher in rural areas than urban areas (93 and 67 percent, respectively). Even in the country's rapidly growing urban areas, self-employed informal workers provided essential services such as water, food, and transportation. Other common types of informal work included agriculture, commerce and trading, domestic work, security guards, and raising cattle.

Most workers in the informal sector and part-time workers were not covered by wage or occupational safety standards or social protections.