

# Angola 2024 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; arbitrary arrest or detention; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists, or censorship; child 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 committed human rights abuses. Nevertheless, accountability for human rights abuses was limited due to a lack of government checks and balances, lack of institutional capacity, a culture of impunity, and government corruption.

## **Section 1. Life**

### **a. Extrajudicial Killings**

There were several reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings during the year. Security forces sometimes used excessive force. The National Police expelled 32 members for poor conduct during the first six months of the year, according to the government.

In March, the National Police detained an officer accused of killing and subsequently burning the body of an individual believed to be involved in informal diamond mining in Lunda Norte Province. A National Police spokesperson said authorities had opened an investigation to determine the cause of the “tactical police incident.”

### **b. Coercion in Population Control**

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

## **Section 2. Liberty**

### **a. Freedom of the Press**

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.

Individuals were increasingly able to use private media and social media platforms to criticize openly 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 that prohibited “insult against the State, its symbols and entities” to suppress freedom of expression.

In August, the public prosecutor’s office charged retired general and opposition political figure Kamalata Numa with insulting the state for a Facebook post in which he suggested a former general was killed in 2022 instead of dying from an illness as was officially reported. The case continued at the end of the year.

## **Physical Attacks, Imprisonment, and Pressure**

Reporting on corruption, poor governance, and human rights abuses were the primary reasons for attacks against journalists, which often occurred with impunity. In January, a journalist for opposition-run Radio Despertar reported masked assailants attempted to take his computer and telephone before attempting to kill him. He had been working on an investigative

report on corruption involving the provincial director of education in Bengo.

### **Censorship by Governments, Military, Intelligence, or Police Forces, Criminal Groups, or Armed Extremist or Rebel Groups**

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.

The Regulatory Entity for Social Communication (ERCA) was a body composed of 11 counselors designated by political parties represented in the parliament and the government. 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 (\$26.70), which represented a substantial part of a journalist's average 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.

### **Efforts to Preserve the Independence of the Media**

In January, President Joao Lourenco inaugurated a new Journalist Training Center in Huambo Province. The facility was designed to enhance the professional skills of journalists across the country through specialized training.

## **b. Worker Rights**

### **Freedom of Association and 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.

Penalties for violations of freedom of association were less than those for analogous violations such as civil rights violations, and penalties were never applied against violators.

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. During the year, the International Trade Union Confederation criticized the country's restrictions on freedom of association and collective bargaining. 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 historically close relationship with labor unions, including historically supporting the country's largest union confederation. The government labeled 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 the right to strike by replacing striking workers and using threats of violence to end strikes. During public sector worker strikes in March, police arrested four striking workers in Bengo and Huambo Provinces for

nonviolent, strike-related activities.

## **Forced or Compulsory Labor**

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

## **Acceptable Work Conditions**

### **Wage and Hour Laws**

A minimum wage for the formal private sector existed and varied by sector and size of employer; it was less than the official estimate for the poverty income level in some cases. The minimum general monthly wage of 32,181.15 kwanza (\$37) during the year increased to 50,000 kwanza (\$58) for small companies and startups and 70,000 kwanza (\$81) for all other private sector employers. The government also during the year raised the base of all public sector monthly salaries from 30,000 kwanza (\$35) to 100,000 kwanza (\$116). 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 per day, 40 hours per month, or 200 hours per year.

## **Occupational Safety and Health**

Occupational safety and health (OSH) standards were generally appropriate for all main industries in the country. The government did not always proactively enforce OSH standards nor investigate private company operations unless complaints were made by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and labor unions. 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 crimes such as fraud. 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.

During the year, the government conducted two large-scale labor inspection operations. It uncovered 10,367 labor infractions during the first phase of the operation, ranging from excessive work hours; failure to enroll workers in the Social Security system; lack of compliance with safety, hygiene, and



health codes; child labor; and harassment, among other violations.

Inspection teams successfully enrolled 7,151 workers and 60 companies in the Social Security system, and companies hired 1,236 new workers after being required to abide by the legal limit for work hours.

As much as 80 percent of the workforce (approximately nine million persons) was employed in the informal economy and therefore outside the purview of the labor inspectorate. 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. Children largely worked in the informal sector.

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

## **c. Disappearance and Abduction**

### **Disappearance**

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

## **Prolonged Detention without Charges**

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.

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. A functioning but ineffective bail system, widely used for minor crimes, existed. Prisoners and their families reported prison officials demanded bribes to release prisoners.

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 punishable by eight or more years in prison 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.

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.

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 charge. The visible presence of security forces was often enough to deter significantly what the government deemed unlawful demonstrations. In January, police detained human rights lawyer Zola Bambi ahead of his court appearance to represent a political activist who was arrested at a peaceful protest the night before. Authorities held Bambi for 10 hours before releasing him without charge.

Excessively long pretrial detention continued to be a serious problem. An inadequate number of judges and poor communication among authorities contributed to the problem. As of July, the government held approximately 3,500 prisoners 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. Civil society organizations reported many prisoners who could have benefited from sentencing reductions under a 2022 amnesty law remained in prison because they lacked financial means to hire legal counsel to

request early release.

#### **d. Violations in Religious Freedom**

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

#### **e. Trafficking in Persons**

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

### **Section 3. Security of the Person**

#### **a. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment**

The constitution and law prohibited such practices, but the government did not always enforce these prohibitions.

Periodic reports continued that police used beatings and other abuses 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. In January, authorities arrested two members of the security forces in Kwanza Norte for sexually abusing a girl, age 17, they had detained.

Although impunity in security services persisted, the minister of the interior and police authorities openly condemned some acts of violence or excessive use of force against individuals and asked victims to report abuses to the National Police or the Office of the Public Defender.

## **b. Protection of Children**

### **Child Labor**

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>.

### **Child 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 more than 30 percent of girls were married before the age of 18. The traditional age of marriage in lower income groups coincided with the onset of puberty, and child marriage was particularly prevalent in rural areas.

## **c. Protection to Refugees**

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

## **Provision of First Asylum**

The law provided for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government had 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, but no refugee status determinations were completed during the year. 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 established. The government continued efforts to document refugees, issuing 3,000 refugee identity cards since 2023, thereby providing some refugees proof of legal residence and better access to participation in the formal economy. Despite this effort, most refugees still did not have valid documents.

## **d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement**

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