

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 12/007/2008
05 September 2008

UA 245/08

Intimidation

ANGOLA

**Association for Justice Peace and Democracy (AJPD)
Other Angolan human rights organizations**

The authorities are attempting to shut down one of Angola's most active human rights organisation, the Association for Justice Peace and Democracy (AJPD). This organisation has played an important role in publicising human rights violations and promoting human rights awareness in Angola. It has also provided human rights training for the Angolan police force.

The procurator general began proceedings in the Angolan Constitutional Court to ban the AJPD on 4 September. The court gave the AJPD until 19 September to present their arguments.

The action against AJPD comes three months after the authorities officially closed the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Angola and almost two years after they banned the only human rights organization operating in the Angolan Province of Cabinda at the time, Mpalabanda. The country is involved in its first elections in 16 years, and the involvement of civil society is indispensable, making the attempts to close down the AJPD and other human rights organizations especially worrying.

Angola is a state party to the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly; freedoms also guaranteed under Angola's own Constitution.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In June 2006 the government began legal action in the Provincial Court of Cabinda to ban Mpalabanda, under the Law of Associations of May 1991 (*Lei das Associações de Maio de 1991*). The government alleged that Mpalabanda incited violence and hatred. It also accused Mpalabanda of carrying out political activities rather than being a civil society organization. On 20 July 2006 the court decided to ban Mpalabanda. The court's judgement made no mention of Mpalabanda promoting violence and hatred, and no witnesses were called to give evidence to this effect.

The harassment and intimidation of human rights organizations continued into 2007, when the Director General of the Technical Unit for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid (UTCAH) announced in a meeting with national and international NGOs based in Angola that the government would soon stop the activities of NGOs without a social impact for the population or for the executive. He later accused four human rights NGOs in Angola - the AJPD; *Mãos Livres*; the Angolan branch of the Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa, the Open Society Foundation; and the local housing rights organization, SOS-Habitat - of alleging violations of the citizens' human rights so as to justify their activities, while actually carrying out illegal acts. He also accused them of inciting people to react, even violently at times, against governmental institutions and authorities.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Portuguese or your own language:

- expressing concern that the authorities are intimidating and harassing the human rights organisation,, Association for Justice Peace and Democracy and other prominent human rights organizations, and threatening them with closure;
- expressing concern that the authorities are engaging in this intimidation and harassment at a time when Angola is engaged in its first elections in 16 years and therefore at a time when the participation of civil society, and especially human rights organizations is essential;
- reminding the authorities that Angola is a state party to the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, and expressing concern that the intimidation and harassment of human rights organizations are an infringement of these rights, which are also guaranteed under Angola's own Constitution.

APPEALS TO:

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Salutation: Excelência

Procurator General of the Republic

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COPIES TO:

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Salutation: Exmo. Sr. Provedor de Justiça

and to diplomatic representatives of Angola accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 October 2008.