P8_TA(2015)0315

Angola

European Parliament resolution of 10 September 2015 on Angola (2015/2839(RSP))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to its previous resolutions on Angola,
– having regard to the statement of 12 May 2015 by the spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on Angola,
– having regard to the joint statement of 17 October 2014 following the 1st Angola-European Union Ministerial Meeting,
– having regard to the EU-Angola Joint Way Forward document of 23 July 2012,
– having regard to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders and on Freedom of Expression,
– having regard to the Council conclusions of June 2014 on the 10th anniversary of the EU Guidelines,
– having regard to Article 21 TEU and the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights, in which the EU commits to ‘continue to throw its full weight behind advocates of liberty, democracy and human rights throughout the world’,
– having regard to the Cotonou Partnership Agreement signed in June 2000,
– having regard to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
– having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights,
– having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas in recent months the Angolan Government has intensified its clampdown on any suspected challenge to its authority, thus violating human rights as enshrined in the Angolan constitution; whereas freedom of association and assembly in Angola continue to
be suppressed and there is growing concern that the military and intelligence services have become the driving forces behind the arrest and prosecution of human rights activists;

B. whereas on 14 March 2015 human rights activist José Marcos Mavungo was arrested without a warrant, and on 28 August 2015 prosecutor António Nito asked the court in the Angolan province of Cabinda to sentence Mavungo to 12 years imprisonment on the charge of inciting rebellion, despite no evidence being presented that he had committed any crime;

C. whereas lawyer Arão Bula Tempo was arrested on the same day for alleged involvement in the organisation of the same protest; whereas Arão Bula Tempo was subsequently released on 13 May 2015 pending his trial on sedition charges;

D. whereas the journalist and human rights activist Rafael Marques was condemned on 28 May 2015 to a 6-month jail term suspended for two years for the publication in 2011 of the book, ‘Blood Diamonds: Corruption and Torture in Angola’, which detailed more than 100 killings and hundreds of cases of torture allegedly perpetrated by security guards and soldiers in the diamond fields of the Lundas region; whereas the complaints submitted by Marques to the Public Prosecutor concerning human rights violations in the Lundas region were not subject to investigation;

E. whereas 15 youth activists were arrested between 20 and 24 June 2015 in connection with a private political discussion; whereas Captain Zenóbio Lázaro Muhondo Zumba was subsequently arrested on 30 June 2015 on the grounds of alleged links with the 15 activists arrested;

F. whereas all those detained were illegally and arbitrarily arrested and accused of preparing a rebellion and a coup attempt against the President and other government members;

G. whereas the 15 activists detained are held in pre-trial detention, have not been formally charged, are without full access to legal counsel and visits from family members attempting to provide food, and are held in solitary confinement;

H. whereas the activists were arrested and had their homes raided without the authorities presenting any warrant; whereas it has been reported that they were subject to physical and psychological torture as well as death threats;

I. whereas the authorities are making threats against the mothers of the young prisoners who are getting mobilised, and the ruling MPLA party has prevented demonstrations by supporters to ask for their release; whereas a peaceful demonstration by relatives of the prisoners in Luanda on 8 August 2015 was met with attacks and violent repression by the security forces on the ground;

J. whereas in July 2015 four human rights defenders and a Radio Deutsche Welle correspondent were temporarily detained while visiting other activists in a prison in the Luanda province, on the accusation of intending to make politics in prison;

K. whereas the right to peaceful protest and the right of association and expression are recognised in the Angolan constitution;

L. whereas there have been reports of a massacre in Huambo in April 2015 by the police forces of followers of the religious sect Luz do Mundo; whereas the figures reported by
diverging sources range from dozens to thousands of deaths and many displaced persons; whereas for months the Government has failed to address the urgency of conducting an independent investigation, while fiercely denying the high figures; whereas the Ombudsman is currently preparing a report on the events;

M. whereas the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called for an international inquiry into the incident, which sparked the Government to open a judicial investigation;

N. whereas the Government of Angola has also stepped up both mass and small-scale forced evictions in Luanda and other cities in order to remove people living in informal settlements and eliminate street traders, including pregnant women and women with children;

O. whereas new legislation was introduced in March 2015 outlining increased control over non-governmental organisations;

P. whereas civil society has repeatedly denounced the link between corruption, the depletion and misappropriation of natural resources by the ruling elite and human rights abuses committed against those who pose a threat to and denounce the status quo;

Q. whereas, despite commitments by the Angolan Government to step up efforts to improve its anti-money laundering/combating financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) system and some progress made, the Financial Action Task Force – an intergovernmental organisation founded in 1989 on the initiative of the G7 to develop policies to combat money laundering – continues to identify strategic deficiencies in Angola’s AML/CFT system;

R. whereas independent reports have established that oil income, the Government’s main resource, has not been directed towards sustainable development or local communities, while the ruling elite has become richer;

S. whereas Angola has vast mineral and petroleum reserves, and is one of the world’s fastest-growing economies, especially since the end of the civil war; whereas its economic growth is highly uneven, with the majority of the nation’s wealth concentrated in a disproportionately small sector of the population;

T. whereas the economic crisis in the country following the sharp drop in oil revenues is likely to trigger further social unrest and protests against the government;

U. whereas in October 2014 Angola reaffirmed its commitment to the political dialogue and cooperation agreed in the EU-Angola Joint Way Forward document, in which good governance, democracy and human rights are essential pillars;

V. whereas, in accordance with Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement between the EU and Angola, the exchange of information on good governance and human rights takes place within a formal political dialogue at least once a year in the framework of the 2012 EU-Angola Joint Way Forward document;

1. Is deeply concerned about the fast deteriorating situation in terms of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic space in Angola, as well as the serious abuses by the security forces and the lack of independence of the judiciary;
2. Calls on the Angolan authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all human rights defenders, including Marcos Mavungo and the 15+1 activists arrested in June 2015, and to drop all charges against them; calls also for the immediate and unconditional release of any other activists, prisoners of conscience or political opponents arbitrarily arrested and detained solely for their political views, journalistic work or participation in peaceful activities;

3. Urges the authorities to ensure that no acts of torture or ill-treatment are performed on the detainees and to guarantee full protection and access to their families and lawyers;

4. Calls on the Angolan authorities to immediately put an end to cases of arbitrary arrest, illegal detentions and torture by the police and security forces; reiterates that prompt, impartial and thorough investigations must be carried out into all allegations of human rights violations, including torture, by police and security forces and that the perpetrators be brought to justice;

5. Is gravely concerned by the continuous attempts to limit freedom of expression and media freedom, peaceful assembly and association, and the increased breaches of these freedoms by the authorities, and calls on the Angolan authorities to ensure the immediate and unconditional upholding of these freedoms; further calls on them to fully implement the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and other international and regional human rights instruments ratified by Angola;

6. Asks the EU Delegation in Luanda to deliver on the EEAS’s commitments to support and protect human rights defenders (HRDs) worldwide through concrete, visible steps that especially include trial observation, political and material support to HRDs, their lawyers and families and systematic engagement by the EU and its Member States with the Angolan authorities on human rights at all levels of relations, including at the highest level; further asks the Delegation to step up the political dialogue with the Angolan Government in all political, trade and development relations, to ensure that it upholds its national and international human rights commitments as promised during the 1st EU-Angola Ministerial Meeting of October 2014; urges it to use all appropriate tools and instruments, including the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, to do so;

7. Calls on the EU and the Member States to acknowledge the high level of corruption by the Angolan authorities which seriously undermines respect for human rights and development, to implement the principles of the human rights approach toolbox ahead of any dealings with Angola, and to review the focal sectors of its National Indicative Programme under the 11th EDF;

8. Regrets the fact that, despite the completion of a national survey in 2007 and a major mine action programme, the extent of the APL/ERW threat is still not known with confidence; urges the EU to monitor, control and evaluate the effective use of funds and to ensure that the allocated budget is used in an efficient and targeted manner so that land is cleared as it should be;

9. Urges the Angolan judicial authorities to assert their independence from any political instrumentalisation and to ensure the protection of rights recognised by legal instruments, such as access to justice and the right to a fair trial;
10. Urges the Angolan Government to conduct an urgent, transparent and credible inquiry into the Huambo massacre, and to provide support to the survivors who have been displaced; echoes the UN calls for an international and independent complementary investigation;

11. Remains concerned that measures to combat violence against women and children have not been implemented; calls on the authorities to strengthen the fight against harmful traditional practices, such as the stigmatisation of children accused of sorcery;

12. Recalls the commitment made by Angola under the Cotonou Agreement to respect democracy, the rule of law and human rights principles which include freedom of expression and freedom of the media, good governance and transparency in political offices; urges the Angolan Government to uphold these provisions in accordance with Articles 11b, 96 and 97 of the Cotonou Agreement and, failing that, asks the European Commission to launch the relevant procedure in accordance with Articles 8, 9 and 96 of the Cotonou Agreement;

13. Urges the EU and the Member States to address the transparency of trade in all natural resources, including oil, and notably to fully implement and monitor the existing legislation on country-by-country reporting; calls on the Angolan authorities and foreign companies to help strengthen governance in the extractive sector by abiding by the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and to review the implementation of the Kimberley Process; further calls on the Angolan Government to submit a plan to join the Open Government Partnership and henceforth to lay out a concrete plan to fight corruption, increase transparency and enhance public accountability;

14. Encourages EU and US cooperation and coordination on implementation of Section 1504 of the Dodd-Frank Act;

15. Calls on Member States’ national administrations and supervisory authorities to step up vigilance of compliance with European anti-money laundering legislation, including due diligence normative principles and proper risk analysis, especially involving Politically Exposed Persons originating from Angola;

16. Welcomes the Angolan Government’s acknowledgement of problems in relation to compensation in cases of land seizure, and welcomes the media reports which suggest that the distribution and compensation mechanisms are improving; encourages the Government to continue its efforts in this direction;

17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the African Union, the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights, the governments of the countries of the SADC region, the President and Parliament of Angola, the US Government, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the UN Human Rights Council, and the ACP-EU JPA.