
Angola Monitor

Issue 1/14

The Angola Monitor covers the politics, economics, human rights, democracy and development of Angola. It is published quarterly by Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA).

This issue covers:

Politics: the constitutional court ruling that MPs cannot hold inquiries into executive decisions, renewed speculation about the President's health, Parliament's approval of the 2014 budget, Independence Day celebrations and Brazil's attempts to arrest an Angolan army general.

Economics: the potential impact of the new international transparency standards on the extractives industries, Isabel dos Santos' latest media interests and South African company Nampak plans to build a \$250m factory.

Human rights: the leaked government report which blames security forces for the death of two activists, the government crackdown on a UNITA demonstration and a funeral procession, rioting in Luanda's prisons and the government announcement on restricting religious 'sects'.

Aid and development: the cholera outbreak in the south of the country and the launch of a new farm scheme to improve market access.

This issue is also available in Portuguese.

We welcome readers' responses to the Angola Monitor. Please send your comments to info@actsa.org. For more news and information on Angola and southern Africa visit the ACTSA website www.actsa.org.

Political news

Constitutional Court rules MPs cannot hold inquiries

The Constitutional Court ruled at the end of October that Angola's Parliament does not have the power to hold inquiries into executive decisions, nor do its members have the power to call for a public audience with ministers to discuss specific matters. According to the ruling ministers and officials can only be brought before parliament with prior ministerial authorisation and formal parliamentary request. The Constitutional Court's ruling on the 2010 constitution was in response to a request by a group of MPs from the ruling party MPLA, (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*) for clarification on the issues.

Angola's Parliament has seen an increase in the number of questions asked by opposition MPs since the 2012 elections when the MPLA saw a reduction in its majority from 191 seats to 175 out of 220 seats. There have also been calls by opposition MPs for inquiries, particularly into the establishment of the Sovereign Wealth Fund.

Opposition groups have criticised the Constitutional Court's ruling, arguing that the judges are chosen by the President and that it will weaken Parliament and its ability to hold the government to account.

Government denies speculation about President's health

President dos Santos made his second private visit within a few months to Barcelona on 9 November, renewing rumours about his health. Reports from Portuguese broadcaster RTP on 28 November that the President had been admitted to the cancer unit of a clinic in Barcelona were rapidly denied by the government. Foreign Minister Georges Chikoti said "I don't have anything to say, because it is not true," An official government communique accused RTP of spreading "irresponsible lies".

Previous visits to Barcelona by the President have also led to rumours about his health. According to the government his last private visit to the city between June and August 2013 had lasted longer than expected due to repairs being carried out on the presidential palace.

President dos Santos son, Jose Filomeno de Sousa has played down the inevitable rumours that he is being prepared to succeed his father as president. Jose Filomeno dos Santos, who was appointed as chair of Angola's sovereign wealth fund in June 2013 told Reuters that his appointment was "in no way anything to do with a political campaign of any kind." Rumours are likely to continue however that the next president of Angola will either be him or vice president Manuel Vicente.

Parliament approves 2014 budget

Angola's 2014 budget was approved by Parliament on 12 December. The budget divides \$55.4bn of expenditure between public administration (34%), social sectors, including education, health, housing and social protection (30%), economic affairs, including agriculture and transport (19.6%) and defence and public order (16.45%).

Virgilio Ferreira, MPLA bench leader said "With this approval, the state can contribute to better promotion and protection of rights, given the importance it gives to the social sector but also to justice in general." However, opposition parties criticised the budget for prioritising defence and public order over education, health and agriculture.

The new budget assumes the country's growth rate will increase to 8.8 per cent from 5.1 per cent in 2014. Economists have said this is optimistic, with the Economist Intelligence Unit predicting a growth rate of 6.1 per cent.

The government has faced a number of challenges with financial management in 2013. In July it emerged that the government had ran up domestic arrears of almost \$3bn, largely owed to construction and service companies. Accounts for 2011 were only received by Parliament at the end of October 2013, over a year after they were due to receive them and lacked information by departments including the Ministry of Defence and the Office of the President, which has an annual budget of \$45m. Service delivery and social projects were also slowed down by a lack of general budget spending in the first half of 2013.

Independence Day celebrations focus on social justice

Angola's 38th anniversary of independence from Portugal was celebrated on 11 November with rallies and events throughout the country, many of which were organised by the MPLA. The main celebration took place in Benguela Province under the banner "Let us celebrate November 11, by promoting social justice and human development". It was chaired by vice president Manuel Vicente, as President dos Santos left the country for Spain a few days earlier.

The MPLA Politburo issued a statement saying that more needs to be done to tackle poverty, improve living conditions and share oil wealth. It also committed to improving the quality of governance and transparency in public services.

Brazil's judicial authorities attempt to prosecute army general

The judicial authorities of Brazil have issued an international arrest warrant for General Bento dos Santos Kangamba for human trafficking for sexual exploitation, criminal organisation and imprisonment. The 'red notice', which appears on the Interpol website follows an investigation by the federal police in Sao Paulo into the alleged international trafficking of Brazilian women. General Kangamba is married to a niece of President dos Santos. Angolan businessman Fernando Vasco Inacio Republicano is also wanted by the Brazilian authorities for connection with the alleged trafficking which is said to have been operating for over 10 years.

In June 2013 police in Monaco attempted to arrest General Kangamba in connection with the transfer of \$3million in cash from Portugal to France, but were unable to detain him as he a diplomatic passport holder. General Kangamba has denied the allegations.

The Angolan Parliament agreed a treaty with Brazil in October 2011 to allow for the transfer of prisoners between the two countries. But it has not yet been signed into law by the President. It is unclear if the case will damage the historically strong diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Economic news

New transparency standards could affect extractives industries

New disclosure regulations, being developed in the United States and European Union could open up transactions between major oil companies and the Angolan government to public scrutiny.

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) is finalising regulations to implement the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010. European Union member states will be required to implement new accounting and transparency directives into national law by July 2015. Both sets of legislation will require oil, gas and mining companies to disclose detailed information about the payments they make to governments across the world.

A number of oil companies are challenging the new laws in the US. The American Petroleum Institute, a US lobbying group representing Chevron, BP, Total and ExxonMobil filed a legal challenge to the US laws in July 2013 claiming that Angola, China, Cameroon and Qatar should be exempt as they have national laws that ban the disclosure of revenue payments. The courts have subsequently withdrawn the SEC implementing rules and ordered that they be reissued. If the API is successful, and Angola is exempt from the regulations, major US oil companies will be allowed to keep payments to the Angolan government confidential.

Isabel dos Santos' media interests grow

US company Forbes Media has entered into a partnership with Angola's ZAP to establish Forbes Portuguese Africa, which they plan to launch as a bimonthly publication from April 2014. ZAP, the Angolan pay TV and publishing company which was launched in 2010 is 70 per cent owned by Isabel dos Santos and 30% owned by ZON, which she also part owns.

In September 2013 Forbes magazine published an article alleging that many of Isabel dos Santos business interests could be linked to the influence of her father President dos Santos. The article 'Daddy's Girl: How An African 'Princess' Banked \$3 Billion In A Country Living On \$2 A Day' said "As best as we can trace, every major Angolan investment held by Dos Santos stems either from taking a chunk of a company that wants to do business in the country or from a stroke of the president's pen that cut her into the action." Isabel dos Santos' representatives however deny that her business interests are connected to her father.

In November Forbes magazine ranked Isabel dos Santos as Africa's richest women, and the seventh richest person on the continent, with an estimated wealth of \$3.5bn. Amongst her investments are a 25% stake in Angola's mobile phone network Unitel, a 25% stake in Angola's Banco BIC and a stake in oil company GALP. She also has interests in a number of Portuguese companies including a 25% stake in cable TV company ZON Optimus and 20% in Banco BPI.

Nampak plans \$250m factory

Nampak, the South African packaging company announced in mid November that it was planning to build a major new drinks container plant in Angola. The company already has a plant in the country which produces 1,800-1,900 cans per minute for Coca-Cola and is due to expand further, but estimates that demand is significantly higher at 1.2bn cans per year and growing.

As the average personal disposable income in Angola has increased, so too has the number of South African companies looking to invest in the non oil sector in the country, particularly supermarkets.

Tim Leaf-Wright, general manager of Nampak Angolata said “We’re really focusing on Nigeria and Angola at this time”. He estimated that investment in the new plant will “probably be in the region of \$250 million”. Angola now has the fifth largest economy in Africa, behind South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria and Egypt.

Human rights news

Leaked report blames security forces for death of activists

Angola’s domestic intelligence service has been implicated in the abduction, torture and deaths of António Alves Kamulungue and Isaías Cassule, two protest organisers who have been missing since May 2012. Their alleged role in the killings are described in a confidential Interior Ministry report, which was leaked to the media on 9 November.

The disappearance of the two has been raised repeatedly with the authorities by numerous national and international groups. It was also raised with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and mentioned by the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner, Navi Pillay, in her final communiqué when she visited Angola.

Since the leaking of the report the attorney-general’s office issued a statement saying “Given the evidence collected, it became practically proven that the two missing citizens were kidnapped...Their whereabouts are still unknown, and the possibility that they were victims of murder has not been discarded”. They launched an investigation and reported that four officials had been arrested. On 14 November Sebastião Martins, director of the intelligence services was dismissed by President dos Santos.

Government crackdown on UNITA demonstration

The authorities used force to disperse a nationwide UNITA demonstration on 23 November, after the Interior Ministry banned the event on the previous day for security reasons. The protest, which was supported by various opposition and civil society groups, was organised to call for justice for António Alves Kamulungue and Isaías Cassule, the two activists who were abducted in May 2012. In the run up to the march state media warned that that the protests were a threat to peace.

In the early hours of 23 November police raided the offices of a number of opposition groups, including UNITA, to confiscate party materials. A number of activists attempting to put up posters near the presidential palace were arrested. Manuel de Carvalho, a 28 year old activist, later died in hospital after being shot in the back by a presidential guard. The police said that the group had been distributing “subversive and offensive propaganda posters” in “violation of the security parameter of the presidential palace.” They said that the killing of Manuel de Carvalho was an “unhappy incident,” and happened when he attempted to escape.

Armed rapid intervention and regular police as well as horse and dog squads were present in large numbers at Santana Cemetery in Luanda, where the march was due to begin. They blocked the road and used teargas to disperse the crowd. The march was called off at midday by UNITA leader, Isaias Samakuva. According to the police 292 opposition activists were arrested across the country and released.

The authorities did permit a ‘march for stability’ to go ahead in Luanda on the same day. The march organisers ‘Friends of the Good and Peace’ were also permitted to hold a march in support of President dos Santos in October 2013.

Funeral procession blocked

The funeral procession for Manuel de Carvalho, the activist who was shot by the presidential guard (above) was stopped by a police roadblock when mourners attempted to march from central Luanda to the Santana cemetery. The police permitted mourners to proceed to the cemetery on public transport. Abel Chivukuvuku, CASA-CE leader said "There was total intolerance. It is unacceptable, as we had yesterday coordinated with police that we would hold a peaceful funeral march, but it was the police who blocked us".

Rioting erupts in Luanda's prisons

Major prison riots erupted in Luanda's Viana and Central District prisons in December. In the first riot in Luanda's central district prison, nine people died and 22 others seriously injured. According to reports the rioting started after inmates set fire to mattresses.

A second riot took place in the city's Viana prison at the end of December. Reports from the government news agency said that 52 were injured and mentioned no deaths. However, the human rights website Maka Angola said that prison sources had disclosed that 65 were injured and four had died in the riot. Maka Angola also alleged that the majority of injuries were sustained when shots were fired at prisoners' legs. The Interior Ministry have announced that a commission will investigate the cause of the riot.

Government announces reduction in religious 'sects'

Angola's Ministry of Justice and Human Rights issued a list of 170 faith groups whose application for recognition had been rejected including the Angolan Islamic Community and numerous evangelical Christian churches. Minister of culture, Rosa Cruz e Silva, said that the government wanted to reduce the number of 'sects' operating in the country.

The restrictions have been widely condemned internationally as an attempt to ban Islam. The Islamic Community of Angola, an umbrella organisation for Muslims, has claimed that all of the countries mosques have been closed, except those in Luanda and that eight mosques have been destroyed in the last two years. David Já, president of the organisation said "they usually issue a legal request for us to destroy the building and give us 73 hours to do so. Failure to do so results in government authorities doing it themselves".

In order to be registered and have the right to build places of worship, a religious group must have at least 100,000 members and a presence in at least 12 provinces. There are approximately 90,000 Muslims living in Angola.

There are also fears about an increase in harassment of Muslims. Amnesty International and the US State Department have previously voiced concerns about the erosion of religious freedoms. David Já said "As things stand, most Muslim women are afraid to wear the veil. A woman was assaulted in hospital in Luanda for wearing a veil, and on another occasion, a young Muslim lady was beaten up and told to leave the country because she was wearing a veil".

Alex Vines, Head of the Africa Programme at the think tank Chatham House believes that the legislation is "targeting mostly Brazil-style evangelical groups that have mushroomed across Angola in recent years", some of which have fuelled the increase in discrimination against Muslims in the country. He said "It highlights once again poor communication and clumsy policy by the Angolan authorities, and how ill thought through policies are distorted by Angolan social media, the opposition and the international press".

The authorities in Angola deny the accusation that they are trying to ban Islam. The Angolan Embassy in Washington said Angola is "a country that does not interfere in religion. We have a lot of religions there. It is freedom of religion. We have Catholic, Protestants, Baptists, Muslims and evangelical people". Manuel Fernando, director of religious affairs at the ministry of culture said "There is no war in Angola against Islam or any other religion... There is no official position that targets the destruction or closure of places of worship, whichever they are".

Aid and development news

Cholera outbreak follows drought

Heavy rainfall in southern Angola, following the lengthy drought, has resulted in an outbreak of cholera, primarily in Cunene province. According to the ministry of health over 1,000 cases and 48 deaths were recorded during a two-week period in November. In the year until the beginning of December 133 deaths had been recorded in Cunene, whilst 804 cases and 23 deaths were recorded in Huila province.

There are fears that the figures could be significantly higher as they only include those who have sought help at health facilities. Cunene is an extremely rural province and many of the roads are poor, making it difficult to reach health facilities.

The drought which started at the end of 2011 and affected over 1.8 million people, primarily in the south of the country resulted in major food shortages and acute malnutrition rates as high as 25 percent in some areas, have left people highly vulnerable to waterborne diseases including cholera.

At the beginning of December the government sent a team of physicians, nurses and diagnosis technicians to the region to support efforts there to tackle the outbreak. The Action of Churches Together (ACT) Alliance launched a major public health education campaign in the region on December 16. In the short term the programme will provide food, drinking water and hygiene facilities.

New farm scheme to improve market access

The government has launched a new scheme to help small scale farmers to access the market and bring down the cost of domestically produced food. The Programme of Acquisition of Agricultural Products (Papagro) will provide a network of centres where farmers can sell their products to commercial buyers. Refrigeration and storage units will be provided for the produce and farmers can expect to receive a fixed price for their goods, provided they meet strict quality controls.

Although many areas in Angola have fertile soil and a good water supply agricultural yields are low and a large proportion of food is imported. Many farmers moved to the cities during the war and many former farming areas are still affected by landmines. Recent droughts, poor roads and supply chains and a lack of irrigation systems have also hindered production and mean that many domestically produced products are more expensive than foreign imports.

Papagro is the latest of a number schemes to improve domestic agricultural production, including a microfinance programme in 2010 and Presild, a scheme to supply Nosso Super, a government supermarket chain. Both these schemes have struggled, partly due to the 2011 droughts. It is yet to be announced where the new centres will be located, whether or not producers will be guaranteed a sale, and how the process will compare with imported products.

The articles in the Angola Monitor do not necessarily represent any agreed position of ACTSA itself.