

**Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**

Ref.: AL AGO 2/2025  
(Please use this reference in your reply)

18 September 2025

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacity as Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 59/4, 51/8, 53/4, 52/9, 52/4 and 52/7.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning the protests, strikes and social distress that occurred in Angola in July 2025. According to the information received, there was indiscriminate use of force against peaceful protestors, including lethal force that resulted in hundreds of injured people and the death of several individuals; the arbitrary detention of peaceful protestors, bystanders, journalists and individuals that were not directly involved in the protests; and the harassment and persecution of human rights defenders during and after the incidents. This information raises concerns regarding the full implementation of your Excellency's Government's obligations to respect and protect the rights and fundamental freedoms under international human rights law, in particular articles 7, 9, 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

According to the information received:

At the beginning of July 2025, the price of diesel increased from 300 to 400 kwanzas per liter, representing a rise of more than 30%. Considering that diesel is the fuel most used in public transport, the increase sparked protests due to its impact on the population's cost of living. Protests were organized by a wide range of actors, including trade unions and students. On several days between 12 and 30 July, thousands of citizens mobilized in Luanda and districts in other provinces including Benguela, Huambo and Huíla.

On 12 July 2025, thousands of demonstrators gathered peacefully in Luanda's São Paulo Square with the intention to march to the National Assembly. The convening of the demonstration was notified to relevant authorities following the legal requirements. Nevertheless, police showed up and used tear gas, batons and physical force against peaceful protestors, leaving dozens of participants with serious injuries. At least 17 demonstrators were arbitrarily detained. They

were all released after the intervention of lawyers and civil society organizations.

On 19 July 2025, movements called for a public demonstration in Luanda and other provincial capitals to protest the impacts on the cost of living of the increase of fuel price, transport fares and school fees. In Luanda, hundreds of students took to the streets aiming to march to the Ministry of Finance. Demonstrators reported an Internet shutdown that lasted for approximately 8 hours. The National police blocked the main route preventing the demonstrators from reaching their destination and confrontations with the police emerged resulting in 9 people injured and 17 arrested. 16 of the detainees were released the same day, while one person remained in custody for a summary trial, accused of 'offending the authorities.' Public officials allegedly used inflammatory declarations calling the protestors "hooligans".

Article 333 of the Penal Code defines the crime of "insulting the State, its symbols, and bodies," punishing anyone who publicly and with the intent to offend, insults the Republic of Angola, the President, or any sovereign body with imprisonment of six months to three years or a fine. The same article provides for imprisonment of up to two years or a fine for anyone who insults the flag, insignia, or anthem of the Republic. These provisions are often interpreted as encompassing conduct that "offends the authorities."

In parallel, the taxi drivers' association called a national strike for three days (from 28 to 30 July 2025). The strike resulted in significant blockages in the transport system. This in turn sparked social distress which was exploited by looters; this created confusion and an increased violent response from the police. According to information published by the Police on 31 July 2025, at least 30 people were killed, including a police officer, and 277 protestors and bystanders were injured, allegedly from lethal use of force by the Police. Civil society organizations are indicating that most of the deaths were extrajudicial or summary executions, even against protesters who had already been immobilized.

Casualties and injuries occurred throughout the country, though the highest numbers were in Luanda province, followed by Benguela, Huíla, Huambo, Malanje, Bengo and Lunda Norte. While there is not an official account of deaths and injuries, reports indicate that 21 civilians died in Luanda alone, during the first 48 hours of protests, so the number of overall casualties is likely higher. One police officer is among those registered dead

According to the information received, during the protest days, in July across the country:

- 118 commercial establishments and 24 public buses, more than 20 private vehicles, five defense and security force vehicles, a motorcycle and an ambulance were destroyed;
- more than 1,500 people were arrested, including more than 1,200 in Luanda alone. Among the arrested were hundreds of young people,

including children and human rights defenders, many of them in increased situation of vulnerability. The Ministry of Interior informed that at least 83 children were being held in Luanda for their ‘involvement in acts of vandalism’. There is information indicating that they were detained on suspicion of being ‘in the wrong place at the wrong time’. Some reports indicate that some of the teenagers were detained inside their own backyards while the police indiscriminately raided homes or when they were chasing fleeing ‘vandals’.

We have been informed that mass summary trials started on 30 July in response to the cases. In the first two days of the process, hundreds of detainees were brought before courts in Luanda and the surrounding areas, in collective and expedited proceedings. In the Luanda Provincial Court, five simultaneous trials were held involving 22 defendants accused of “participating in a riot”. In the Belas Court (Luanda Sul), another 15 people went on trial for crimes of looting and vandalism. In the Dande district (Bengo), 61 people were expected to be on trial in connection with the protests. Expedited hearings were held even in outlying municipalities including Kilamba Kiaxe where six people, including a child, were accused for “crimes committed during the riots”, “publicly instigating crime” and others related to posting messages on social media. Some of the individuals detained reported having been beaten by the police before being taken to the station, even when they did not resist the arrest.

The summary trials resulted in summary and expedited judgments in the immediate days following the protests. In the first week of August at least 7 youth (from 17 to 22 years) were reportedly sentenced for their involvement in riots, even when they were detained in their houses’ backyards, or when they were running away from looters. The sentences ranged from community service to 12-18 months in prison.

Following the end of the protests, activists, human rights defenders and civil society representatives reported a climate of intimidation. Some of them were reportedly arbitrary arrested, in some cases with violence, accusing them of “organizing the riots”. In some cases, motivation seems to be retaliation for these activists having taken part in previous peaceful demonstrations or for criticising the government on social media.

#### *Arrest of activists and journalists*

Mr. **Oswaldo Sérgio Correia Kaholo**, is a 36-year-old human rights defender, known for his commitment to human rights. He was politically imprisoned in 2015 as part of the “15+2” group accused of attempting a coup d’état, a case considered by many to be fabricated. In 2015 he was convicted in a public trial that many assessed as aiming at intimidating dissenting voices. A letter with this case was sent by the Special Procedures to the Angolan government on October 2025 ([AGO 3/2015](#)).

Mr. Kaholo was arrested at his home on 19 July 2025 by the Criminal Investigation Service (SIC), on a warrant from the Public Prosecutor's Office, on suspicion of crimes of “rebellion and public incitement of violence”. The

charges are related to a live broadcast made by him on 12 July 2025 in which he raised concerns about the increase of fuel and allegedly made “serious threats” against public officials. His location was concealed for the first 24 hours and contact with his family was denied. After pressure from family members and lawyers, SIC confirmed his location but continued to hold him incommunicado.

On 22 July 2025, Mr. Kaholo was allegedly brought before the judge, who ordered his preventive detention, a measure that remains in place to date. This decision is believed to be a coercive measure. On that day, he was transferred to the Calomboloca Penitentiary (Icolo e Bengo province). His family was not notified of his transfer and only learned of his whereabouts a week later. Once they found out where he was, his relatives were able to visit him and bring basic supplies, but he was not allowed to receive food. He remained in the same clothes for several days, and one week after his arrest, he began a hunger strike protest after being denied food from his family.

He refused the meals provided by the prison for fear of poisoning, and to denounce the political nature of his detention. He regained access to his personal belongings when his family was allowed to see him, and began receiving food brought in from outside, which mitigated the need to continue his hunger strike.

To date, Mr. Kaholo’s family has been able to visit him. However, he allegedly remains in pre-trial detention, awaiting further action by the Public Prosecutor’s Office or the preliminary investigation of the case.

Procedural law establishes that pretrial detention is an exceptional and temporary measure. Article 283 of the Code of Criminal Procedure defines maximum terms: 4 months without charge, 6 months without indictment, 12 months until conviction in the first instance, and 18 months without final judgment. These terms can be extended to 6, 8, 14, and 20 months in cases involving crimes punishable by more than 5 years and involving particularly complex cases.

**Mr. Serrote José de Oliveira** is a 33-year-old human rights activist and bookseller, who on 28 July, took to the streets to broadcast live on social media the taxis’ strike, and asking people to respect the recommendation to stay at home. That same day, while on his way to the general hospital, he was allegedly shot in his left leg, apparently by a plainclothes SIC agent.

After the shooting, it is alleged that, instead of receiving immediate and appropriate medical treatment following his injury, the individual was first taken to the Talatona Command, then to the GAMEK Village Hospital in Luanda, and subsequently to the Luanda General Hospital. However, before a medical discharge was issued, he was reportedly removed by the authorities and transferred to the São Paulo Prison Hospital. Despite the seriousness of his condition, he was allegedly informed that he would only undergo a medical examination, with no possibility of hospitalization.

Following this, he was transferred to the transition cells of the SIC-General in Luanda, where he remained until 13 August 2025. During this period, he

allegedly did not receive adequate medical care, in violation of his right to health and physical integrity.

On 1 August 2025, he was brought before the Luanda District Court for his first interrogation, but neither he nor his lawyers were informed of the charges against him. He was remanded in custody on charges of vandalism. The judge issued a warrant with the instruction that he be admitted to Sao Paulo Prison Hospital in Luanda, but this was apparently removed from his case file.

He was detained for some days at the SIC and was then transferred to the Calomboloca prison (in the province of Icolo and Bengo), which is located around 80 kms outside Luanda, making it difficult for his family and lawyer to visit him.

Since 13 August 2025, the case has been under the jurisdiction of the Attorney General's Office, specifically within the Criminal Investigation Services at the Luanda Police Command. Although the case was forwarded to the Department for Combating Organized Crime (DCCO), reportedly it was never officially assigned, and no investigator has been appointed.

This situation has seriously undermined the right to adversarial proceedings and has limited the defense's access to the case files, in violation of the procedural safeguards established by the Angolan Code of Criminal Procedure. In response to these irregularities, the defense filed a habeas corpus petition on 22 August 2025. The petition, registered under No. 493HC-B25, is still pending a decision.

Regarding his detention conditions, Mr. Serrote remains in the Calomboloca Prison, in solitary confinement in a single cell, without regular access to sunlight. It is alleged that he is now in a state of extreme psychological exhaustion. It is further alleged that the wound on his leg remains inflamed and bandaged, without regular medical monitoring or appropriate medication, a situation that significantly increases the risk of infection and further deteriorates his health.

#### *Harassment against families of Human Rights Defenders*

Ms. **Laurinda Gouveia** is a human rights defender who lives in Luanda. On 31 July agents of PIR raided her home. She was not in the city at the time and her husband, Mr. **Alfredo Agostinho**, was reportedly subjected to violent physical assaults that resulted in the loss of consciousness and the need for medical attention. He suffered serious injuries as a result of the beating. He continues to have pain and visible markings from the assault. He is under medical supervision. The assault also resulted in his psychological distress.

Without wishing to prejudge the accuracy of the above-mentioned allegations, we express our serious concerns at what appears to be an increasing restriction on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly in the country. They may further amount to violations of the right to liberty and security of the person and against arbitrary arrest and detention; the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including the requirement of humane treatment in detention,

contained; the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including freedom of the press to report on events without intimidation or harassment; the right to effective remedies, including a State's duty to conduct effective investigations into alleged human rights violations with a view to identify, prosecute and punish those responsible.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and any comment you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide information regarding the management and use of force during the above-mentioned protests, and report on the numbers of casualties and types of injuries of protesters. Please provide information about any investigations opened concerning violent acts (of both civilians as well as law enforcement personnel) and the stage and/or outcome of those proceedings.
3. Please provide specific information on investigations initiated or foreseen into the killings of protesters and police officers in the context of protests, in accordance with the Revised United Nations Manual on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-Legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions (Minnesota Protocol), with a view to establish the causes and circumstances of their killing and hold those responsible accountable.
4. Please provide detailed information on the number of people arrested during the above-mentioned events; the charges brought against them and their current status; with specific information about children detained. Please include specific information concerning access to legal assistance and contact with their families. Please also provide updated information on the number of people who currently remain deprived of liberty in connection with the above-mentioned demonstrations and please explain what charges are being brought against them.
5. Please provide information on measures taken to carry out a prompt, impartial, independent and effective investigation into the allegations of excessive use of force against peaceful protesters, civil society activists, human rights defenders, lawyers, and other participants, bystanders and supporters.
6. Please provide information about the basis of the charges against Mr. Osvaldo Sérgio Correia Kaholo and Mr. Serrote José de Oliveira, and how those are compatible with the obligations of your Excellency's Government under international human rights law. Please also provide

updated information about their health status and whether they have access to adequate medical care.

7. Please provide detailed information on steps taken to prevent future instances of excessive use of force by law enforcement officials including, for instance, the provision of adequate training on the lawful use of force and the policing of protests.
8. Please provide information on measures taken or envisaged to be adopted to ensure that alleged victims of excessive use of force by law enforcement officials can effectively report their cases to the authorities with no negative consequences (such as further violence, intimidation, harassment); and please also provide information on measures in place or envisaged to be adopted to ensure that law enforcement officials, and their commanding officers, eventually found responsible for disproportionate use of force do not continue to work in law enforcement contexts.
9. Please provide information on the measures taken by Your Excellency's Government, as well as any plans currently underway, to advance justice and reparation for the alleged violations. This includes steps taken to ensure accountability, provide effective remedies to victims, and implement guarantees of non-repetition in accordance with international human rights standards.
10. Please provide concrete information regarding the consultation processes carried out prior to the adoption of norms, regulations, and other instruments of public decision-making, in order to ensure that affected individuals have the opportunity to participate in these decisions. Kindly describe in detail both the formal and informal mechanisms of citizen participation, as well as the dialogue processes aimed at addressing past and present grievances and preventing the emergence of violent responses to government decisions.
11. In relation to the cases described above, we call for full access to the case files to be granted to the defense, the provision of adequate and regular medical care, the immediate termination of isolation measures and arbitrary restrictions, and the prompt judicial review of the legality of the preventive detention imposed.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

We would like to inform you that having transmitted a communication, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention may also transmit the case through its regular procedure in order to render an opinion on whether the deprivation was arbitrary or not. The present communication in no way prejudices any opinion the Working Group may render. The recipient is required to respond separately to this letter and the regular

procedure.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person responsible of the alleged violations.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Gina Romero  
Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Matthew Gillett  
Vice-Chair on communications of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

Morris Tidball-Binz  
Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions

Irene Khan  
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Mary Lawlor  
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Alice Jill Edwards  
Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

## Annex

### Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we wish to refer to the right to freedom of peaceful assembly (article 20 UDHR, 21 ICCPR and 11 African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights), right to liberty and security of the person and against arbitrary arrest and detention (article 3 UDHR; 9 ICCPR and 6 of the African Charter); the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including the requirement of humane treatment in detention, contained, inter alia, in article 5 of the UDHR, articles 7 and 10 of the ICCPR, and articles 1, 2 and 16 of the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), ratified by Angola in 2019; the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including freedom of the press to report on events without intimidation or harassment (articles 19 UDHR and ICCPR, and 9 of the African Charter); the right to effective remedies (article 8 UDHR; and 2 ICCPR).

Moreover, the Constitution of the Republic of Angola, in its article 47, enshrines the right to all citizens to demonstrate and assemble peacefully, without the need for prior authorization. Article 40, in turn, enshrines freedom of expression; article 63 expressly prohibits arbitrary arrest and makes any deprivation of freedom subject to respect for due process of law and prohibits arrest or detention without a valid judicial warrant except in *flagrante delicto*. Article 36(1) guarantees the right to life and prohibits the death penalty. Additionally, article 17(2 and 3c) of the Angolan Penal code rules categorically that minors under the age of 16 are not subject to the common penal regime and that only measures of assistance, education or correction should be applied to them; it also states that children between 16 and 18 years old should serve any sentence of deprivation of freedom, whenever possible, in specific facilities, never being detained with adults.

The ICCPR acceded to by Angola on 10 January 1992, obligates States to respect, protect, and ensure the rights outlined in the Covenant, including the right to life (article 6) and peaceful assembly. While restrictions on this right can occur, they must be justified by law, serve a legitimate aim, and be necessary and proportionate in a democratic society. States are prohibited from unjustly blocking or disrupting peaceful assemblies and must ensure any restrictions are in line with democratic values such as pluralism, tolerance, and broadmindedness.

Use of force by security forces must be exceptional and strictly regulated to safeguard the right to life: lethal force may be used only as a last resort, when strictly unavoidable to protect life from an imminent threat, and only to the minimum extent necessary—any other use risks arbitrary deprivation of life. More generally, force may be used only for a lawful objective (legality), only when strictly necessary to achieve that objective (necessity), and must not cause harm disproportionate to the aim pursued (proportionality), nor be applied in a discriminatory manner (non-discrimination). Authorities must also take all feasible precautions in planning, preparation and conduct of operations to avoid unnecessary, excessive or otherwise unlawful force and, where avoidance is not possible, to minimize risks to life and injury. Failure to meet these duties breaches the State's positive obligations to respect and protect the right to life and to prevent cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and triggers duties to investigate,

ensure accountability and provide reparation.

We further recall that no one shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and that this obligation is not confined to acts carried out against persons deprived of their liberty but also covers excessive police violence (See Human Rights Council resolution 25/38 as well as A/72/178 and A/78/181). In line with the principles enshrined in the CAT, States should establish all acts of torture as offences under domestic law (article 4); exercise jurisdiction over said offences (article 5); receive complaints and examine them promptly and impartially (article 13); and investigate those allegations promptly and impartially (article 12). Prosecutors and courts have a duty to refuse evidence obtained, or suspected of having been obtained, through torture or other illicit means (article 15). Victims are to be protected from reprisals or intimidation during said investigations (article 13) and they have an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation including the means for as full rehabilitation as possible (article 14). At no time shall torture be used to extract information or a confession (article 1), and any statement which has been obtained via such methods, shall be excluded from any proceedings except against a person accused of torture as evidence that the statement was made (article 15).

The ICCPR imposes the obligation on States parties “to respect and to ensure” all the rights in the Covenant (art. 2(1)); to take legal and other measures to achieve this purpose (art. 2(2)); and to pursue accountability and provide effective remedies for violations of Covenant rights (art. 2(3)). The obligation of States parties regarding the right of peaceful assembly thus comprises these various elements, although the right may in some cases be restricted. States are obliged, not to prohibit, restrict, block, disperse or disrupt peaceful assemblies without compelling justification, nor to sanction participants or organizers without legitimate cause (CCPR/C/GC/37).

Article 21 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. These rights can be subjected to restrictions only as narrowly defined by the ICCPR, if such restrictions are clearly established by law for a legitimate aim and be “necessary in a democratic society” and proportionate to the achievement of the legitimate aim. There must be a ‘pressing social need’ for the interference in the enjoyment of these rights (A/HRC/20/27), and States must ensure that any restrictive measures fall within the limit of what is acceptable in a “democratic society”. Even with information about the episodes of public disorder that could occur during and after the peaceful protests and strikes, the response from the National Police seems disproportionate. “Acts of violence by some participants should not be attributed to others, to the organizers or to the assembly as such. Thus, some participants in an assembly may be covered by article 21, while others in the same assembly are not” (CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 17).

Law enforcement officials are obliged to exhaust non-violent means and to give warning if it becomes necessary to use force, unless doing either would be manifestly ineffective. In all cases, “law enforcement decisions, strategies and actions should be based on the concepts of knowledge, facilitation, communication and differentiation and must be aimed at de-escalating and preventing tension and recourse to the use of force” (A/HRC/55/60, para. 42). Any use of force must comply with the fundamental principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, precaution and non-discrimination, and those using force be accountable with the requirements enshrined in international law, guided by standards such as the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms

by Law Enforcement Officials and the United Nations Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement (CCPR/C/GC/37).

And even “where individuals’ conduct places them outside the scope of the protection of article 21, for example because they are behaving violently, they retain their other rights under the Covenant, subject to the applicable limitations and restrictions” (CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 9). Also, the possibility that a peaceful assembly “may provoke adverse or even violent reactions from some members of the public is not sufficient grounds to prohibit or restrict the assembly” (CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 27). In those cases, states are obliged to guarantee that the measures adopted regarding the safety of the assembly and its participants are reasonable and do not impose disproportionate burdens.

Pursuant to the fundamental principles set forth in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, also known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, in particular, articles 1 and 2 of the Declaration which state that everyone has the right to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels and that each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Article 5 of the Declaration states that everyone has the right, individually and in association with others (...) to meet or assemble peacefully.

The Human Rights Council in resolution 58/23 strongly condemned the use of internet shutdowns, including the blocking of access to communication platforms, to intentionally and arbitrarily prevent or disrupt access to or the dissemination of information online, which is inconsistent with international law (PP 19) and called upon States to refrain from Internet shutdowns, (...) (OP 9(j)).

Article 9 of the ICCPR enshrines the right to liberty and security of person, establishing that no one shall be deprived of his or her liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law, as well as the right to legal assistance from the moment of detention. International law on deprivation of liberty includes the right to be presented with an arrest warrant, which is procedurally inherent to the right to liberty and security of person and the prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of liberty, as well as under principles 2, 4 and 10 of the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment. Article 9(4) also entitles everyone detained to challenge the legality of such detention before a judicial authority. The United Nations Basic Principles and Guidelines on Remedies and Procedures on the Right of Anyone Deprived of Their Liberty to Bring Proceedings Before a Court state that the right to challenge the lawfulness of detention before a court is a self-standing human right, the absence of which constitutes a human rights violation.

In its general comment No. 35, the Human Rights Committee also clarified that an arrest or detention may be arbitrary irrespective of its being authorized by domestic law. It also stated that the notion of “arbitrariness” should be broadly interpreted to include elements of “inappropriateness, injustice, lack of predictability and due process of law, as well as elements of reasonableness, necessity and proportionality.” The

Committee also held any arrest or detention carried out as punishment for the legitimate exercise of the rights as guaranteed by the Covenant to be arbitrary, including freedom of opinion and expression (art. 19), freedom of assembly (art. 21), and freedom of association (art. 22). This has also been consistently established in the jurisprudence of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and expression, which includes the right “to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of their frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media...” This right applies online as well as offline and includes political discourse, commentary on one's own and on public affairs, discussion of human rights and journalism among others, and encompasses not only the exchange of information that is favourable, but also that which may be deeply offensive (CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 11). The Committee further asserts that there is a duty of States to put in place effective measures to protect against attacks aimed at silencing those exercising their right to freedom of expression. Any restriction on the right to freedom of expression must (i) be provided by law; (ii) pursue one of the legitimate aims for restriction, which are the respect of the rights or reputations of others and the protection of national security or of public order (*ordre public*), or of public health or morals; and (iii) be necessary and proportionate for those objectives. (CCPR/C/GC/22-23). With regards to proportionality, the Human Rights Committee has clarified that the restrictions must be “the least intrusive instrument among those which might achieve their protective function”. (CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 34). In line with these norms, States shall also not impose any unjustified or arbitrary restrictions on the access of foreign journalists.

Finally, it is necessary to mention that the alleged situations described above, if true, would question the commitments the State of Angola made to the United Nations Human Rights Council in the context of the Universal Periodic Review. Specifically, recommendation 150.92 accepted by the State, demands an immediate, impartial and independent investigation into cases of excessive use of force.

The use of stigmatizing narratives against peaceful protestors—such as labeling them “hooligans” after the protests—instead of addressing human rights abuses, creates a widespread chilling effect that significantly discourages public participation. It restricts the ability to participate fully in society, exacerbates inequalities, fosters environments of fear and hostility, increases polarization and erodes trust between authorities and the public” (A/79/263, para. 71).