

Human Rights Live Here

More than 10,000 families in Luanda have been made homeless after being forcibly evicted from their homes since July 2001. These evictions have been carried out by police officers, soldiers, municipal officials and private security guards, often using excessive force and firearms. Police have on some occasions also arrested and briefly detained those resisting the evictions and members of the local housing rights organization, SOS-Habitat, who were trying to persuade the authorities to stop the forced evictions.

Most recently, around 3,000 families were forcibly evicted from their homes in the adjoining neighborhoods of Iraque and Bagdad in the Kilamba Kiaxi municipality of Luanda. The families' homes were demolished, their possessions destroyed, and they were left without shelter. The demolitions, which took place between 20 and 26 July 2009, were carried out at an unprecedented scale and left Bagdad completely flattened and Iraque partially destroyed. Those still in Iraque endure threats of forced eviction.

Background Information

The Angolan capital Luanda hosted UN World Habitat Day in October 2008. The same month a construction company forcibly evicted at least 17 families and demolished their homes in the Iraque neighborhood of the city.

More than 10,000 families in Luanda have been made homeless after being forcibly evicted from their homes since July 2001. Few families involved in any forcible evictions in Luanda have been compensated for their losses. Some were re-housed about 30 to 40 kilometers from the city in areas lacking jobs, schools, hospitals, basic services and sanitation. However, the vast majority have been left to fend for themselves. Many have been the victims of repeated forced evictions and hundreds of families remain without shelter, living in the ruins of their former homes.

The end of the 27-year-long civil war in 2002 brought new opportunities for development and reconstruction which increased pressure on urban land. Most of Luanda's estimated population of 4.5 million remain at risk of losing their homes to make room for up-market housing, offices and infrastructure projects. Forced evictions to make way for such development have targeted the poorest neighborhoods and affected families that are among the least able to assert their rights and seek recourse from the justice system. Left to fend for themselves, families must construct makeshift shelters or share already-overcrowded accommodation with family or friends elsewhere.

Mass evictions around Luanda are typically carried out without prior notice, let alone consultation. In the cases documented by Amnesty International and local human rights groups, police and other government officials carried out forced evictions and house demolitions without eviction orders. Even when families are notified about an eviction, they have no meaningful opportunity to challenge it. In one case in Luanda's Cidadania neighborhood in April 2006, for example, the municipal administration ordered 12 families to vacate their plots within 48 hours. The notice alleged that the families were illegally occupying land reserved by the state for

industrial purposes, but it did not explain how the families could refute this. Residents told Amnesty International they had purchased the land from the municipality.

Government officials often justify forced evictions by claiming houses targeted for destruction are illegally built on land owned by the government and earmarked for development projects. In fact, the legal situation in most cases is not so straightforward. Land use is governed by several sets of laws, and those that deal with urban areas have been only partially implemented. But Angola does have some very clear international obligations, including giving people adequate notice of any proposed evictions – the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing recommends at least 90 days. Force should only be used when strictly necessary, and then only in a manner that is proportionate to the circumstances. The government has publicly acknowledged that Angola's land law obliges it to compensate – whether by money, materials or alternative housing and land – those who are subjected to expropriation of land for public interest.

Send Letters To:

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Sample Letter

Dear Minister José da Silva Ferreira,

More than 10,000 families have been forcibly evicted from their homes in Luanda since 2001. Most of the victims have not received alternative housing or compensation and many continue to live in deplorable conditions. In addition, thousands of families in Luanda remain at risk of further forced evictions.

I urge you, as Minister for Urban Planning and Housing, to ensure that there are no further mass forced evictions in Angola, that the victims of previous forced evictions, including those in Bagdad, Iraque, Cambamba I, Cambamba II and Cidadania neighbourhoods in Luanda, receive adequate compensation, and that those who cannot provide for themselves receive alternative housing, thus prioritizing the most vulnerable.

The government of Angola should make plans to ensure security of tenure and access to adequate safe water and sanitation for those living in informal settlements. I also urge you to adopt guidelines for evictions which comply with international human rights law, based on the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement.