

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVISTS FACING HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION

Members of the non-governmental organisation Mission of Beneficence Agriculture of Kubando, Inclusive Technologies and Environment (MBAKITA) are facing harassment and intimidation, including death threats and attacks, in Cuando Cubango province, Southern Angola, because of their work for the defence and promotion of the rights of people from ethnic minorities in Southern Angola.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Minister Francisco Manuel Monteiro de Queiroz
Honourable Minister of Justice and Human Rights
Rua 17 de Setembro
Luanda, Angola
Email: gsedhc.mjdh.angola@gmail.com

Honourable Minister Francisco Manuel Monteiro de Queiroz,

*I am concerned that members of the non-governmental organisation **MBAKITA** are being targeted with increasing acts of intimidation, death threats and attacks. I believe that these acts are being carried out with the aim of preventing members of MBAKITA from doing their work for the defence and promotion of the rights of people from ethnic minorities and denouncing corruption in the region.*

*Unidentified armed men broke into the house of **Pascoal Baptistiny**, executive director of MBAKITA, on 17 and 23 April, and 11, 12 and 13 May. The men entered into Pascoal Baptistiny's home, tied the hands of the two security guards and took several items of electronic equipment, including three computers, a video camera, memory cards and cell phones. These are only the most recent incidents in a series of attacks that Pascoal Baptistiny and MBAKITA activists have been enduring over the years.*

MBAKITA activists have also regularly received anonymous death threats and intimidating phone calls, with messages such as: "We know Mr. Pascoal... if you continue to report on San people's issues, you and your family may disappear"; "The office will be raided and you won't be able to do anything about it, so don't waste your time reporting to the police"; "Stop this, or you will die and your family too"; "The indigenous community does not need any saviour". Fearing further reprisals, 17 MBAKITA activists stopped working for the organisation in April 2020. On 11 May, Pascoal Baptistiny received 15 intimidating anonymous calls.

MBAKITA has filed several complaints at Menongue police station regarding death threats, harassment and intimidating anonymous calls in 2018, 2019 and 2020. However, no measure has been taken so far to ensure their protection and to investigate these acts, so the perpetrators remain in impunity.

In the light of the above, I urge you to:

- *Take all appropriate measures to ensure that Pascoal Baptistiny and other MBAKITA activists are provided with adequate protection, in accordance to their wishes and in consultation with them, so that they can continue their work freely without fear of reprisals;*
- *Carry out a prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigation into the attacks, death threats and intimidation against Pascoal Baptistiny and other MBAKITA activists;*
- *Ensure a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders, allowing them to peacefully continue to carry out their human rights work.*

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The NGO MBAKITA has worked since 2002 to defend the rights of San people and traditional communities in the southern provinces of Angola. Since 2018, MBAKITA's members have been increasingly subjected to intimidation, harassment, torture, enforced disappearances and even killings in suspicious circumstances. Perpetrators of the attacks have continued to carry out these attacks with impunity. To this day, the authorities have failed to investigate the threats and attacks adequately, and no one has been held accountable.

On 16 April, Mr. Pascoal received an anonymous call with the message: "We know the vehicle that has been travelling to the communities, and we will cut your legs". That evening, the organisation's car was vandalized, making it impossible for MBAKITA members to visit communities.

On 17 April, at about 1:30 am, three masked armed men broke into the home of Pascoal Baptistiny. They immobilised the two security guards at his residence, entered the house and took two computers, a video camera, memory cards and cell phones.

On the night of 23 April, unidentified men broke into the home of Mr. Pascoal, broke the house's external spotlights, immobilised the security guards, and stole one computer.

On the night of 12 May, two unidentified men attempted to break into Mr. Pascoal's home. The night before, two unknown men had also tried to break into his residence, the security guards were able to prevent the two men from getting inside. Mr. Pascoal called the police, who took two hours to arrive at his home.

We are concerned that that series of recent attacks against Mr. Pascoal and MBAKITA members may be connected to Amnesty International's publication on 15 April about the police's assault against nine MBAKITA members and their arbitrary detention on 2 April during a COVID-19 prevention campaign in Cuando Cubango.

These recent incidents are part of a repeated pattern of harassment and intimidation against MBAKITA members in Cuando Cubango province. The members of the organizations and their families have been targeted with death threats and physical attacks. Fearing for the families' safety, MBAKITA has decided not to publicly denounce the attacks.

The catholic church has also been targeted with increasing harassment for their human rights work. On the night of 28 April, three unidentified men broke into Radio Eclésia, a Catholic Church radio station, and vandalized the broadcast equipment. Radio Eclésia was unable to broadcast independent news between 29 and 30 April.

On 11 April, national police officers arrested Father Júlio Alberto Carlos, a Menongue diocesan, without a warrant in his residence at the Centro Pastoral Cristo Rei, Menongue city. Father Júlio has been vocal for the respect and protection of San's people rights. The Judge of the Menongue Court summarily condemned Father Júlio Alberto Carlos who was released after the payment of a penalty.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Portuguese - English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: [24 June 2020]

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: MBAKITA (it/its)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

Secretary Ana Celeste Cardoso Januário
Secretary of State for Human Rights and Citizenship
Rua 17 de Setembro,
Luanda, Angola
Email: secretariado.dh.mf@gmail.com

And copies to:

His Excellency Mr Geraldo Nunda
Embassy of the Republic of Angola
22 Dorset Street W1U 6QY
020 7299 9850
Fax 020 7486 9397
embassy@angola.org.uk