

29 March 2016

Update: Angola – Human rights defenders from the 15+2 case sentenced to jail terms of between two and eight years

On 28 March 2016, the Provincial Court of Luanda sentenced the human rights defenders from the [15+2 case](#) to jail terms ranging from two years and three months to eight years and six months for the alleged crimes of preparatory acts of rebellion and association of criminals.

The 17 human rights defenders are Messrs **Domingos da Cruz, Sedrick de Carvalho, Luaty Beirão, José Gomes Hata, Nito Alves, Afonso Matias “Mbanza Hamza”, Hitler Samussuko, Inocêncio Brito “Drux”, Albano Bingo, Fernando Tomás “Nicola”, Nelson Dibango, Arante Kivuvu, Nuno Álvaro Dala, Benedito Jeremias, Osvaldo Caholo**, who were arrested in [June 2015](#), and Ms **Rosa Conde** and Ms **Laurinda Gouveia**, who were also sentenced, but not held in pre-trial detention.

Of the judgments made against the human rights defenders, the most severe was handed down to Domingos da Cruz, who was sentenced to eight-and-a-half years' imprisonment for the crimes of preparatory acts of rebellion and association of criminals. Jeremias Benedito, Nuno Álvaro Dala, Sedrick de Carvalho, Nito Alves, Inocêncio de Brito, Laurinda Gouveia, Fernando António Tomás “Nicola”, Mbanza Hamza, Osvaldo Caholo, Arante Kivuvu, Albano Evaristo Bingo, Nelson Dibango, Hitler Samussuko and José Gomes Hata were all sentenced to four years and six months in prison for the same crimes. Rosa Conde and Jeremias Benedito received more moderate sentences and will serve two years and three months in prison. Luaty Beirão, who was convicted of “falsifying documents”, alongside the above-mentioned crimes, was sentenced to five years and six months in prison.

The human rights defenders' trial was marred with irregularities. On 21 March 2016, during the closing arguments, the Prosecutor's Office altered the charge sheet, dropping the charge of organising a *coup d'état* to overthrow President José Eduardo dos Santos, and including the new indictment of association of criminals, punishable with a more severe sentence than the crime of organising a coup. This new charge was therefore not subjected to analysis by the defendants' lawyers.

The human rights defenders were formally informed of their indictment on 8 October 2015, when the maximum period for pre-trial prison, 90 days according to Angolan law, had already expired. Domingos da Cruz was arrested on 21 June 2015 following the arrest of Afonso Mayenda, Luaty Beirão, Manuel Nito Alves, Albano Bingo and nine youth activists on 20 June 2015, during a conference on the "Philosophy of peaceful revolution", given by Domingos da Cruz, in the neighbourhood of Vila Alice in Luanda. Laurinda Gouveia and Rosa Conde were not amongst those detained, but they were also charged. Lawyers for the human rights defenders have five days to file an appeal before the Supreme Court.

Front Line Defenders is gravely concerned by the conviction of the 17 human rights defenders, as it believes the judicial action against them to be solely motivated by their peaceful and legitimate work in the defence of human rights. Further concern is expressed by the irregularities that marked the trial. Front Line Defenders calls on the Angolan authorities to repeal the sentence against the human rights defenders.