

23 June 2021

Angola: Harassment and persecution of journalist and human rights defender Coque Mukuta

On 17 June 2021, human rights defender and journalist **Coque Mukuta** was interrogated by the National Department of Investigation and Penal Procedure (DNIAP) of the Attorney General's Office of Angola, and was charged with abusing "press freedom" under Chapter IV Article 74 of the Angolan Press Law.

[Coque Mukuta](#) is a correspondent journalist for the Voz da América newspaper in Luanda. The human rights defender previously worked for Radio Despertar, covering anti-government demonstrations in the past in Angola. He was the co-author of the book *Os Meandros das Manifestações em Angola – I Volume* (The Troubled Ways of Demonstration in Angola – Book I), which focused on the anti-government demonstrations organised in Angola in 2011 and early 2012 and how security forces violently disrupted the demonstrations and harassed those taking part in them. He has been the subject of several threats and intimidation, including break-ins at his home and has received threatening letters.

On 17 June 2021, Coque Mukuta was questioned by the National Department of Investigation and Penal Procedure (DNIAP) of the Attorney General's Office of Angola. The human rights defender was charged with abusing "press freedom" under Article 74 of the Angolan press laws, due to an [article](#) he wrote in August 2020, in which he criticises the Angolan government for turning a blind eye to corruption. The Attorney General's Office has ordered that the human rights defender is prohibited from leaving the country and must seek permission from the government if he needs to leave his residence for more than 5 days.

The questioning took place two days after Coque Mukuta had peacefully protested in front of the Attorney General's Office in Luanda on 15 June 2021, to contest the political persecution of media professionals. In his company were three other journalists and human rights defenders, **Jorge Neto** from Jornal Manchete, **Lucas Pedro** from Club-k and **Escrivão José** from Hora H. Coque Mukuta has reported that he and other human rights defenders have previously received [threats and reprisals](#) due to their legitimate work in defence of the freedom of expression and human rights.

This is not an isolated episode. At present, seven journalists and human rights defenders are being investigated by the Angolan Attorney General's Office for crimes related to slander and defamation. Journalists and human rights defenders report that as the elections in August 2022 are approaching, the persecution of human rights defenders who stand up for freedom of expression has intensified as a way to intimidate those who criticize repressive measures taken by the authorities and create an atmosphere of fear among the population.

The Government of the Republic of Angola has repeatedly failed to fulfil its obligations to uphold the right to freedom of expression, as human rights defenders have been consistently [targeted](#) by Angolan authorities, for their legitimate work in exposing human rights violations in Angola. Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned regarding the judicial prosecution and preventive measures against Coque Mukuta and believes that he is being targeted solely as a result of his work in promoting human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of Angola to:

1. Immediately drop all charges and unconditionally remove all restrictions on the free movement of Coque Mukuta and cease all further forms of surveillance or harassment against him motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Take measures to ensure that government officials or other public figures refrain from making statements or declaration stigmatising the legitimate work of journalists and human rights defenders;
3. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Angola and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.