



## Angola - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Monday 18 May 2009

### Information on the current political situation

Page 3 of a *HRW* report from February 2009 says

“2009 should see a presidential election in Angola, for the first time since 1992. Parliamentary elections held in September 2008 failed to fully meet regional and international standards. Urgent reforms are essential if the people of Angola are to be able to freely exercise their civil and political rights and vote for the presidential candidate of their choice. Those reforms need to be entrenched ahead of Angola’s first local elections, to be held in 2010. The parliamentary elections on September 5-6, 2008, were the first in 16 years. They brought a resounding victory for the ruling Popular Liberation Movement of Angola (MPLA), in power since 1975, with 81.7 percent of the vote. The elections were contested by 14 political parties and coalitions, but only four opposition parties were able to secure representation in parliament, where the MPLA’s landslide translated into 191 of the 220 seats” (HRW (23 February 2009) *Democracy or Monopoly? Angola’s Reluctant Return to Elections*)

The same page also says

“In 2008, in the months before the official parliamentary election campaign, Human Rights Watch raised doubts about prospects for the elections being free and fair: The oversight body, the National Electoral Commission (CNE) lacked impartiality because it is dominated by the ruling party; the media environment was unfavourable to the opposition and freedom of expression restricted; unchecked intimidation and political violence by ruling party supporters was preventing opposition parties from campaigning freely throughout the country; and a climate of repression prevailed in the enclave of Cabinda, where armed conflict has continued despite a 2006 peace agreement. During the one-month official election campaign period, which opened on August 5, 2008, Human Rights Watch witnessed some improvement. Unlike during the pre-campaign period, the police provided protection to opposition parties, meaning they could campaign freely. However, in many other ways the playing field remained considerably slanted in favour of the ruling party. The CNE failed in its role as oversight body, doing nothing to prevent or respond to major violations of election laws during the campaign, such as unequal access to state funds and to the state media. It also obstructed accreditation for national election observers from civil society. On polling day, important safeguards against manipulation such as the use of voter’s rolls were breached, and the CNE obstructed independent monitoring of the tabulation process.” (ibid).

Section 2b of the *US Department of State* report of February 2009 on events of 2008 says

“The constitution and law provide for the right of association; and the government generally respected this right in practice. The government legally may deny registration to private associations on security grounds. Extensive and unexplained delays in the NGO registration process continued to be a problem. The government sometimes arbitrarily restricted associations that it considered subversive by refusing to grant permits for organized activities. During the year opposition parties generally were permitted to organize and hold meetings; however, they reported occasional event-specific harassment by local officials.” (US Department of State (25 February 2009) *2008 Human Rights Report: Angola*)

### Section 3 says

“After having postponed parliamentary elections for two years, the government held the first post-war elections on September 5-6. The ruling MPLA won 81.6 percent of the vote. Domestic and international observers reported that polling throughout the country was peaceful and generally credible, despite the ruling party's advantages due to state control of media and other resources, and serious logistical failures that marred polling in the capital city of Luanda. Opposition parties criticized many aspects of the electoral process, including state control of the media, late disbursement of public campaign funds, the National Electoral Commission's (CNE) failure to accredit some opposition and civil society electoral observers, as well as the CNE's last-minute decision to discard the legal requirement that a voter registry be used to verify voters at polling stations. Despite these and other irregularities, election day was peaceful and more than 87 percent of registered voters participated. Opposition parties generally accepted the electoral results. The ruling MPLA dominated all political institutions. Political power is concentrated in the president and the Council of Ministers, through which the president exercises executive power.” (ibid)

It is also pointed out in this section that

“Opposition parties stated that their members were subject to harassment, intimidation, and assault by supporters of the ruling party. For example, prior to the September elections, the UNITA municipal secretary in Benguela Province reported that a member of his party was beaten for wearing a UNITA T-shirt in the town of Ganda during election campaign period. On August 10, MPLA members harassed UNITA members in Namibe town center when they tried to hang UNITA party flags on lamp posts in the town square. UNITA campaign materials also regularly were torn down in Huambo Province. Opposition party members and civil society leaders cited examples of political intolerance during the election process.” (ibid)

In December 2008 *IPS* notes that “Angola's vast, confusing party landscape is about to undergo a major transformation: as of January, 22 parties and coalitions will simply vanish from the political map. Next month, Angola's Constitutional Court (CC) will extend the death certificate to all parties that failed to pass the 0.5 percent threshold in last September's legislative vote. However, the measure does not apply to parties that did not run in the last election.” (*IPS* (23 December 2008) *Angola: Deadly Countdown for Small Parties*)

## References

HRW (23 February 2009) *Democracy or Monopoly? Angola's Reluctant Return to Elections*

<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/angola0209web.pdf>

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<http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=45210>

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

## Sources Consulted

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Minority Rights Group International

Norwegian Refugee Council

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Refugee Documentation Centre Library

Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database

Regional surveys of the world

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UK Home Office

University Of Maryland Minorities At Risk