

URGENT ACTION

URGENT HEALTHCARE NEEDED FOR JAILED ACTIVIST

On 13 January, activist Tanaice Neutro was arrested in connection to videos he recorded where he called the president a 'clown' and the authorities 'ignorant'. He was tried in October 2022 and handed a suspended sentence of 15 months for causing outrage against state symbols. The judge, however, ordered his immediate release on health grounds. It has been six months since the ruling, but he remains in prison. Tanaice Neutro is in severe physical and mental pain and the prison authorities have not provided the necessary medical care he requires. The Angolan authorities must release him immediately and unconditionally.

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

Minister of Justice and Human Rights

Marcy Cláudio Lopes
Casarão da Justiça, Rua 17 de Setembro
Gombota, Luanda, LU, Angola
E-mail: ndh.mjdh.angola@gmail.com
Portal.minjusdh.contactos@gmail.com

Dear Minister Marcy Cláudio Lopes,

I am writing to express concern for the arbitrary detention of activist **Gilson da Silva Morreira** (also known as **Tanaice Neutro**). On 13 January, he was arrested at the Criminal Investigation Services (SIC) in Luanda, Angola's capital, where he went to seek information about another activist who had been arrested two days before in the context of the taxi drivers' strike.

Tanaice Neutro is a popular artist who often uses kuduro, a type of Angolan music, to express himself about social issues in the country. He was arrested in connection to videos he posted on social media expressing frustration with the situation in Angola, including the levels of poverty, bad governance, corruption, and repression, and called on Angolans to stand up for their rights. In the videos, he also called the president a 'clown' and the authorities – who he accused of abusing their power by arbitrarily arresting people- 'ignorant'.

He was held in pre-trial detention for about six months, contrary to the law that establishes a period of up to 90 days. On 22 April 2022, he was charged by the Court of First Instance initially with four offences (outrage, criminal association, resistance against public official and rebellion) from which three charges were later dropped for being unfounded. The judge then determined on 12 October 2022 that he should serve 15 months of suspended sentence for causing 'outrage to the symbols of the state' (Art. 333 of the Penal Code) in connection to the comments he made about the president and the authorities. However, after reviewing photos and hearing medical testimony, the judge ordered his immediate release on the basis that he was suffering from severe haemorrhoids which required urgent medical attention. The Public Prosecutor's Office submitted an appeal to the Court of Appeal, which is still pending.

Tanaice Neutro urgently requires surgery to treat his haemorrhoids. He has been getting severe headaches and fever, and it is extremely painful for him to empty his bowels, which means he cannot eat the food given to him. There are also grave concerns for his mental health as he has expressed suicidal thoughts on numerous occasions. The denial of access to adequate medical care may amount to torture or other ill-treatment.

I urge you to immediately release Tanaice Neutro, as ordered by the judge, and to ensure that his conviction is quashed as it stems solely from the exercise of his right to freedom of expression. Pending his release, he must be urgently granted with access to adequate healthcare, including, if necessary, outside prison.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Tanaice Neutro, 34, is an activist and artist who uses kuduro, a type of Angolan music, to express his views about social issues such as poverty, inequality, corruption and bad governance. One of his songs is called “protest”, where he describes the challenges people in Angola are facing and the reasons behind the growing number of young people protesting.

Tanaice Neutro was diagnosed with haemorrhoids in 2020. In 2021, he travelled to Namibia to see a specialist who told him surgery was required. He was due to go back to Namibia for the surgery when he was arrested. He is under extreme pain due to the untreated haemorrhoids, has experienced severe fever and has been unable to release his bowels on several occasions due to the pain. He was transferred to the prison hospital for his headaches, but the prison lacks the necessary facilities to carry out the surgery he requires.

It remains unclear why Tanaice Neutro has not been released as ordered by the court in October 2022. The continued detention despite a court order mandating his release, in addition to the fact that the charges stem solely from the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression, render his detention arbitrary.

Amnesty International is concerned with the growing number of activists and human rights defenders being targeted by Angolan authorities for freely expressing their opinions, including online, which is a clear violation of their right to freedom of expression.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Portuguese and English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 13 June 2023

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

NAME AND PRONOUN: Tanaice Neutro (Him/his)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

Please send copies to

- Director of Human rights at Ministry of Justice- Ivan Levita
E-mail: ivanlevita@hotmail.com
- The Secretary of State for Human Rights and Citizenship, Secretary Ana Celeste Cardoso Januário
Email: anaceleste.januario@minjusdh.gov.ao or celestejanuario5@yahoo.com

• President of Angola, Mr. João Lourenço
c/c the Secretary-General of the President, Ms. Sónia Veigas
Address: Secretário-Geral do Presidente da República
Órgãos Auxiliares do Presidente da República
Palácio Presidencial, Rua 17 de Setembro
Cidade Alta – Luanda, Angola
E-mail: secretariageral@oapr.gov.ao

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