

PM DENOUNCES INCITEMENT TO ILLEGAL LAND OCCUPATION

05/03 - Speaking in the National Assembly on 2 May, Prime Minister Fernando da Piedade Dias dos Santos denounced incitement to illegal occupation of urban areas where the government is building housing projects and social and economic facilities.

Replying to questions from opposition deputies during a session at which the government was being questioned on the issue of demolitions, he said that people, who had been affected, in the public interest, had been duly compensated. However, he continued, this was not the case with others who, resorting to all kinds of pretences to gain benefits to which they were not entitled, demanded the same treatment.

Cases of alleged incitement were cited by MPLA deputies during the session and some of those responsible were also identified, including members of the opposition benches and civil society organisations like SOS-Habitat.

The Prime Minister said there were 'some who create and encourage these situations or who give people bad advice'. To seek to justify what they were doing, he said, some presented themselves as staunch defenders of human rights and others were 'carrying out an agenda aimed at destroying the government's image and creating continual difficulties for its work'. 'This is part of the political struggle,' he said.

Many of the demolitions in Luanda have been of huts built precariously in risky places, like the slopes in the Boavista neighbourhood, where people died in landslides during the rainy season.

In other places major economic and social projects were being built, like highways, hospitals, water pipelines, housing complexes, the University City and the new international airport.

Government action in respect of demolitions had to do with people who took possession of land without any legal right to do so, or who occupied land anarchically with the aim of being compensated in the event that the government needed the land for any economic or social project, he continued.

In some of these cases, the Prime Minister said, there had been the complicity of local administrative officials against whom disciplinary action had been taken.

He appealed to deputies to present concrete cases and not mere conjecture during future question and answer sessions, in order that the debate might produce ideas that help to solve problems.

This was the third time in just over a month that the government was asked to explain some of its action in the parliament. In each case the session was requested by Unita, the biggest opposition party. The first was on 23 March, when the issues involved were transparency, corruption, social and political matters and the electoral process. The second, on 25 March, focussed on the cholera epidemic.