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Gunfire and Chaos Grip Angola's Capital as Fuel Protests Turn Deadly

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Gunfire and unrest shook parts of Luanda, Angola's capital, this week as protests over soaring fuel prices escalated into violence, leaving at least four people dead and approximately 500 arrested.

The demonstrations began as a coordinated strike by taxi drivers in response to a 30 percent increase in diesel prices. The price hike stems from a government effort to phase out fuel subsidies, despite Angola being one of Africa's top oil producers. Many citizens argue the country's oil wealth has failed to alleviate the cost-of-living crisis, with average monthly wages hovering around \$75.

What started as peaceful action soon gave way to pockets of looting and clashes with police in several working-class neighborhoods, including Cazenga, Rocha Pinto, and Prenda. Public transportation came to a halt in these areas, while shops and markets closed as a precaution. Though some streets resembled ghost towns on Monday, daily life began to return to normal in much of Luanda by Tuesday afternoon.

The Angolan National Police reported roughly 100 arrests on Monday, with another 400 overnight, bringing the total to around 500. Officers deployed tear gas, smoke grenades, and fired warning shots into the air in an effort to disperse crowds and prevent further vandalism. While these measures are consistent with past protest responses in the country, they have revived concerns about the state's heavy-handed tactics.

So far, no formal statement has been issued by President João Lourenço's administration. However, members of the ruling party have labeled the protests as acts of vandalism rather than legitimate demonstrations. The government's approach is being watched closely, particularly as frustration grows over persistent inequality and stagnant wages despite Angola's status as an oil-rich nation.

While the unrest this week has not engulfed the entire capital, the events in Luanda have highlighted broader social tensions and economic grievances that continue to simmer beneath the surface. With fuel prices expected to rise further as subsidy cuts continue, questions remain about how the state will balance fiscal reforms with the rising cost borne by ordinary Angolans