

AI Index: PRE 01/106/2009
20 March 2009

Angola: Pope should use influence to end threat of forced evictions

Amnesty International today urged Pope Benedict XVI to use his influence with the Angolan authorities to end the threat of forced evictions and fully compensate those that have suffered such evictions, as he visits the country today.

“The Pope must call upon the Angolan authorities to take steps to end the threat of forced evictions and urge the Government to fully compensate all the families that have been affected by such evictions,” said Michelle Kagari, Deputy Director of Amnesty International’s Africa Programme.

Forced evictions - evictions carried out without necessary safeguards - have been carried out by the Angolan authorities in the Angolan capital of Luanda since 2001. Between 2003 and 2006 thousands of people were forcibly evicted from land belonging to the Catholic Church in Palanca, Sapú and Wenji Maka neighbourhoods in the Kilamba Kiaxia Municipality. The forced evictions in these areas were carried out by the Angolan authorities so that the Catholic Church could use the land for its projects.

Although no further forced evictions involving the Catholic Church have been carried out since 2006, it does not appear that any firm commitment has been made not to carry out any further forced evictions. The families living in these areas have not been compensated for damages incurred during previous forced evictions.

“The Catholic Church and the Angolan authorities must provide effective remedies for those that have been affected by forced evictions. The Angolan government should further ensure that any future evictions are carried out in accordance with international human rights standards,” said Michelle Kagari.

Since 2001, Amnesty International has documented cases of forced evictions in Angola.

The Angolan government has carried out repeated mass forced evictions of its people to facilitate urban development projects and the construction of luxury housing, leaving tens of thousands living in poverty. Although there has been a decrease in the number of forced evictions in the country since 2006, thousands of people continue to live under the threat of such evictions. Furthermore, there is still no law specifically prohibiting forced evictions in Angola and no legal provision for security of tenure.