

PUBLIC

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Extrajudicial executions - fear of
further killings

18 September 1998

ANGOLA eight young men and other civilians

Following the reported recent extrajudicial execution, by government soldiers, of at least eight villagers in the Miconje district in the north of Cabinda, there are fears that such killings will continue unless the government takes immediate remedial and preventative action.

On 22 August 1998 Angolan troops surrounded four contiguous villages, Maluangu N'Zau, Nkoi, M'Bitina and Tseke M'Baza. They reportedly tied up a number of people, beat them with the butts of their guns and killed others. The villagers were apparently suspected by the soldiers of supporting one of the armed factions of the *Frente para a Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda* (FLEC), Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave which is separated from the rest of Angola by a narrow salient of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

On 23 August soldiers went on to arrest five young men in Maluangu-N'Zau village whom they beat severely before setting fire to houses in the village. They then took the youths to Tseke M'Baza village where three more young men were reportedly arrested. The soldiers then shut the eight men in a house which they set alight, killing them all.

Houses in M'Bitina and Nkoi villages were also reportedly set on fire, some with people inside them, before the soldiers finally departed on 26 August. Many people were subsequently afraid to return to the area although some of the women did venture back in order to gather belongings and to bury the dead.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Armed and other Cabindan separatist groups have been seeking independence or autonomy from Angola for over 20 years. There are previous reports of government troops torturing and extrajudicially executing suspected FLEC supporters and of burning their villages, often in reprisal for FLEC attacks. FLEC fighters too are known to have deliberately and arbitrarily killed unarmed civilians and to have taken hostages.

The situation in Cabinda has been particularly tense since early 1997 when Angola gave military support to Laurent Kabila, who took power in the DRC, formerly Zaire, in May 1997, and to Denis Sassou Nguesso, who became President of the Republic of Congo in October 1997. Since August 1998 Angolan troops have assisted the forces of President Kabila in the current conflict in the DRC. Angola's military involvement in the DRC and the Republic of Congo should be seen in the context of its interest in ensuring that neither the FLEC factions, nor the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA), National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, are able to use the two neighbouring countries as rear bases. The Angolan authorities also have an interest in depriving FLEC and UNITA of possible assistance from armed opponents of the two neighbouring governments.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in Portuguese or your own language:

- urging senior military officers in Cabinda to issue clear and public instructions to the effect that the killing and torture of unarmed civilians

is forbidden, as stated in the Angolan Constitution and in Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, and that these crimes will not be tolerated;

- calling on the Angolan authorities to carry out a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into the reports of extrajudicial executions and other human rights violations in the Miconje district with a view to bringing those responsible to justice;
- reminding the government of Angola of its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 3 which protects the right to life.

APPEALS TO: (please note that fax numbers may be difficult to obtain and on occasions may be answered in person in which case please request fax tone)

Minister of Defence

General Pedro Sebastião

Ministro da Defesa

Ministério da Defesa

Rua 17 Setembro, Luanda, República de Angola

Telegrams: Ministro Defesa General Sebastião, Luanda, Angola

Salutation: Sua Excelência / Your Excellency

Presidential Adviser on Military Affairs

Coronel António José Maria

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Salutation: Excelentíssimo Senhor / Your Excellency

Military Procurator

General Julião Mateus Paulo "Dino Matross"

Procuradoria Militar, Rua 1º Congresso MPLA,

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COPIES TO:

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and to diplomatic representatives of Angola accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 October 1998.