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PUBLIC STATEMENT

ANGOLA

Hopes of reconciliation jeopardized as cycle of violence spirals

Amnesty International is alarmed by the recent increase in what appear to be politically-motivated killings and the displacement of thousands of people in Angola. Years of effort to build reconciliation out of distrust could be wasted if this wave of violence and abuses of human rights does not stop.

According to the information available to Amnesty International at least 40 people, including more than 20 police officers, have been killed in May alone and dozens of others injured or missing. These figures represent an alarming 50 per cent increase since January 1998.

Some of the attacks in May have been accompanied by raiding and looting but others seem to be aimed purely at government officials and police, United Nations (UN) personnel and sometimes traditional leaders. Many attacks are attributed to former UNITA soldiers but it is not clear to what extent they are acting in a coordinated way. In the past four months in areas where state authority has been extended to areas formerly under UNITA control Angolan police are reported to have killed supporters of UNITA.

The Angolan peace process is supposed to conclude on 30 June but important tasks have not been completed. UNITA still has to hand over 63 areas to state control, including its key strongholds of Bailundo and Andulo. There have been reports of movements of large groups of armed men, allegedly demobilized or unregistered UNITA soldiers.

The breakdown of the peace process in November 1992 was characterized by thousands of deliberate and arbitrary killings by both sides and the ensuing conflict resulted in massive damage to the social and economic fabric of the country with more than a million displaced and an estimated 100,000 killed.

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