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Angola: Police operating 'above the law'

Amnesty International today revealed that despite the inclusion of human rights training in the curriculum of the Angolan police, officers continue to violate human rights and few perpetrators are ever brought to justice.

In almost all of the cases of human rights violations documented in a report released today, *Above the Law: Police accountability in Angola*, Amnesty International found that no investigations were carried out, no disciplinary proceedings followed, and no suspected perpetrators were brought to justice.

"The only way to stop the continuing human rights violations by the police is for police officers to be held accountable for their actions in a court of law," said Muluka-Anne Miti, Amnesty International's researcher on Angola.

Angolan police "disciplinary regulations" require complete obedience to orders. Under the regulations, if a police officer believes that obedience to an order by a superior officer could result in injury, the officer can mention it to his or her superior in private. If the superior insists, the officer is obliged to comply with the instruction from his superior, irrespective of whether it is unlawful or not.

"Due to the requirement of complete obedience in the Angolan police force, police officers often carry out orders without questioning the legality of their actions," said Miti.

"This has resulted in officers participating in illegal actions, such as mass forced evictions and the beating of suspects and their families."

"Police perpetrators of such violent and illegal actions must be taken to court and brought to justice -- and the victims should receive full reparation for their suffering," said Miti.

"The Angolan police must revise their disciplinary regulations to ensure that they contain provisions stipulating that all law enforcement officials have both a right and a duty not to obey unlawful orders -- particularly orders that could lead to a violation of human rights. It should also include provisions for the protection of officers who report or oppose such orders."

In its report, Amnesty International also urged the Angolan government to reform codes and regulations governing the functioning of the police to bring them in line with international standards.

Background

Due to the 27-year-long civil war and inadequate investment in the police, the Angolan National Police is relatively underdeveloped.

During the war many officers were recruited from the armed forces. The war had a brutalizing effect on society, including the police. Furthermore, the involvement of the paramilitary Rapid Intervention Police (Polícia de Intervenção Rápida, PIR) in military combat means that the police may be more inclined to military methods of operating, rather than operational standards for civilian policing.

Prior to 1992, the police implemented legislation that violated fundamental human rights and freedoms.

To see a full copy of *Angola: Above the law -- police accountability in Angola*, please go to:

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engaf120052007>.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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