

February 4, 1991

# **ANGOLA: CIVILIANS DEVASTATED BY 15 YEAR WAR**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS:**

Introduction and Background.....	1
Recommendations.....	4
Testimonies of Abuses.....	5
Case One: Forced Displacement by MPLA, Attacks by UNITA.....	5
Case Two: Woman Captured by UNITA.....	7
Case Three: Repeated Attacks Drive Forcibly Relocated Villagers to Garrison Town.....	8
Case Four: FAPLA and UNITA Steal Food and Children.....	10
Case Five: Increased Attacks, Increasing Poverty.....	12
Case Six: Mass Displacement.....	15
Case Seven: State Security Detainee.....	16

Angola, and its vast majority of rural poor, have been destroyed by the 15-year guerrilla war between Angolan government forces and rebel UNITA<sup>1</sup>. Both sides as well as their regional and superpower backers are guilty of cavalier disregard of the lives and well-being of civilians, who are treated more like chess pieces to be seized by both sides for military advantage than as human beings with inherent dignity, deserving of respect and compassion.

Africa Watch visited Angola in November and December 1990 and was allowed by the government to travel in requested provinces without government escort, even though we published a critical report in 1989. This is indicative of the liberalization underway as the governing MPLA<sup>2</sup> party moves from the single-party Marxist-Leninist state it imposed after winning the 1975 three-way struggle for power following the Portuguese colonial withdrawal. The MPLA now has committed itself to a multiparty system and elections. It hopes that agreeing to this long-standing rebel demand, and sending home the last of the invited Cuban troops, will bring an end to the war.

Recent developments in ceasefire negotiations mediated by the US, USSR and Portugal make it appear that a settlement to the conflict is possible. But other negotiations have failed and a 1989 ceasefire lasted only days. The war is not over and even if it were, it is important to bring the extent of the abuses by both sides to international attention.

Ending violations of the rules of war is essential for the relief of the battered civilian population if the war itself is not ended immediately. UNITA, earlier funded by South Africa and now by the US, has been merciless since 1976 toward civilians and the MPLA, which receives substantial assistance from the USSR.

Although UNITA derives support from the Ovimbundu tribe which makes up almost 40 percent of Angola's population and occupies the fertile Central Plateau, it is the Ovimbundu people who have suffered most from UNITA's war. Time and time again, UNITA attacks villages, indiscriminately killing civilians, robbing them of their few possessions and burning down their homes. This practice is so common that it indicates a UNITA strategy to impoverish and starve civilians living in MPLA-controlled areas. Civilians who do not flee UNITA's attacks are forcibly taken by UNITA hundreds of kilometers away, on foot, and settled in UNITA-controlled territory to farm for UNITA and provide its "base." If given a free choice in peace, they would promptly leave, according to testimonies gathered by Africa Watch. Those taken include anyone fit to walk, men and women alike; at other times, UNITA captures young people alone, as young as eight, separating them from their families, to train them to serve UNITA and adopt its way of life. Probably the majority of the 600,000 -- one million civilians living in UNITA areas have been abducted and forcibly relocated there by UNITA. Young captives are inducted into the UNITA army.

---

União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola.

Movimento Popular de Libertação Total de Angola

Many Angolans abandon their fertile farms because they fear kidnapping or attack by UNITA; or death by one of the many (some say 60,000) antipersonnel land mines scattered on paths throughout the rural areas, the majority by UNITA; or starvation after UNITA steals a farmer's oxen for ploughing, all his stored food, and all his seeds.

UNITA's use of starvation as a weapon has had remarkable success. The United Nations estimates that 500,000 children have died in Angola since 1980 as the direct or indirect result of the war. As the displaced population crowds into the municipalities, deprived of access to their fields, their malnutrition is accelerated by the traffic stoppage UNITA has imposed through indiscriminate use of land mines and ambushes. Unescorted travel between towns is impossible because of the virtual certainty of UNITA attack, even on nongovernmental medical and relief organizations. Food and medical supplies must wait for long convoys to form with military escort; in the meantime, many civilians starve. The only other alternative is the expensive airlift of food by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which has worked over 10 years in Angola.

The United Nations estimates that 1.9 million Angolans are "in a very vulnerable and weakened condition" in nine provinces as the result of war and two years of drought. After urgent appeals, in mid-1990 both UNITA and the MPLA made concessions to allow relief efforts to proceed overland and across their enemies' lines in a UN-coordinated Special Relief Program for Angola (SRPA), and in ICRC convoys. Even UNITA's own population, ordinarily remote from the war, had started to suffer as a result of drought, the 1988 withdrawal of massive South African subsidies, war in the area of its breadbasket, Mavinga, in 1989-90, and the 1990 independence of Namibia. While under South African occupation, Namibia had served as UNITA's overland supply route.

The first unarmed relief convoy under the United Nations flag moved along a temporarily demilitarized "peace corridor" in November 1990. Less than ten convoys had traversed the corridor by year's end, however, scarcely enough to meet the food needs during this crucial period. In January 1991, because of UNITA's destruction of a key bridge, the MPLA prohibited cross-line deliveries to UNITA; as a result, the United Nations had to suspend its entire food relief program.

It is a harsh commentary on MPLA relations with the population that despite its shocking tactics UNITA retains the allegiance of many Angolans. UNITA is not at fault alone for the dire food situation. The MPLA's reaction to UNITA reinfiltration of the Central Plateau was to employ the counterinsurgency strategy of "draining the sea," the strategy of depopulating the countryside to deny rebels a social base. Peasants who had not fled UNITA's abuses -- or who had not yet suffered them -- were suspected by State Security police<sup>3</sup> of being UNITA supporters and forcibly relocated, without notice, to population centers that were crowned with a military

---

Ministry of State Security.

post. This process of displacement, which began in the late 1970s, has by now affected hundreds of thousands of people. It has also contributed significantly to the starvation of thousands who previously tilled fertile lands.

Until reforms in May 1990, the East German-trained State Security police had the power not only to arrest but also to sentence suspected UNITA collaborators to up to four years in State Security jails, as an "administrative penalty," all without judge, trial or defense counsel. Detention conditions have been so bad that many died in custody from illnesses brought on by lack of food. Others, tried and sentenced by special courts, received long prison terms, or even the death penalty. By 1986, more than 5,000 alleged UNITA collaborators were confined in a single prison.

Criticism of the way army recruiters conduct draft sweeps is widespread. They shoot at young draft evaders, injuring and killing many, including bystanders. Young men try to escape conscription because there is no limit on the number of years they must serve in the army, FAPLA;<sup>4</sup> also, they fear mutilation or death by UNITA land mines. Forced civil patrols (Organização de Defesa Popular, ODP), for older men, are also unpopular.

So pathetic is the food situation in Angola that when food convoys for the military are ambushed or do not arrive, the press-ganged troops resort to stealing food from the homes and fields of the peasants they are supposedly protecting against UNITA cruelties.

The rampant abuse of civilians by both sides in the war and the breakdown of cooperation in the United Nations relief effort to stave off mass civilian starvation raise serious questions about the parties' willingness to observe the cease-fire now under negotiation with the mediation of the US, USSR, and Portugal.

Even without waiting for the outcome of the negotiations or a cease-fire, both sides therefore should commit themselves to take certain minimum immediate steps to respect the rules of war so as to ease the intolerable burden on civilians.

---

Forças Armadas Populares para a Liberação de Angola

## **Recommendations:**

### **Both sides should:**

- \* cease pillage and robbery;
- \* put an end to the forced relocation of civilians and permit them to live where they wish;
- \* cease attacks on civilians and carefully limit attacks to military objectives; assure that the attacks are discriminate and obey the rule of proportionality;
- \* prohibit the use of contact land mines, whether antitank or antipersonnel, and promptly remove those contact land mines already laid; and
- \* cooperate fully in the SRPA and ICRC relief efforts.

### **The MPLA government should:**

- \* release all those in jail serving State Security-imposed administrative penalties;
- \* provide humane conditions of detention for all detainees and prisoners;
- \* establish a justice system that protects internationally recognized human rights; and
- \* cease brutal and arbitrary recruitment and conditions of military service for young men.

### **UNITA should:**

- \* cease its attacks on villages, civilian vehicles and all other civilian objects;
- \* stop attacks on food and food convoys, and end attempts to starve people living in MPLA-controlled areas;
- \* cease kidnapping, abduction or forcible removal of civilians and separation of families;
- \* put an end to inducting persons captured from MPLA-controlled areas; and
- \* cease burning civilian homes and buildings.

### **Recommendations to the United States and the USSR:**

Both the United States and the USSR should insist that their respective allies comply with these minimum recommendations, irrespective of progress in negotiations. In light of the practices of gross violations of the laws of war by the government of Angola and UNITA described in this report, we call on the US and the USSR to cease military funding for both sides.

## **TESTIMONIES OF ABUSES:**

What follows are the testimonies of a few of the many displaced Ovimbundu farmers that Africa Watch interviewed in the MPLA-controlled areas of the Central Plateau. We have requested permission from UNITA to visit civilians living in UNITA-controlled areas and speak to them in private. Our visit has been approved but we have not yet been given a travel date.

These testimonies provide a glimpse into the persistent manner that civilians have been devastated by the abuses by both sides to the conflict. Because of their fear of reprisals, the names of the villages as well as of the villagers have been omitted.

### **1. Case One: Forced Displacement by MPLA, Attacks by UNITA**

UNITA attacked a settlement only 15 kilometers away from a garrison town being visited by Africa Watch in early December 1990. According to those fleeing the attack, UNITA did not burn the houses, but it did take the villagers' food and clothes.

Twelve civilians and two civil defense (ODP) had been killed by UNITA in this attack, 12 civilians wounded, and 500 displaced. There were only 30 ODP in the settlement at the time of the attack, and though they ran when it started, two were killed.

A villager told of the erroneous military calculations on the part of UNITA that supposedly led to this attack. The Saturday before, FAPLA troops tried to retake a nearby town from UNITA. They were repulsed and retreated in the direction of this settlement, with UNITA following. Since FAPLA sometimes slept in this place, UNITA surrounded it in the dark.

At 4 am, after catching sight of one ODP who stepped out of his house, UNITA began the attack. When UNITA discovered there was no FAPLA there -- probably when they did not receive return fire -- they stopped shooting, but it was too late; the people had already died.

One villager told Africa Watch that his daughter was killed in the attack. His wife and son were lost; they had fled when the shooting started and he could not find them. It was too soon to know if they had been captured and spirited away by UNITA, or were still hiding in the bush. Another young man was returning from burying his brother and his brother's 12 year old son, both civilians.

This is the third time that hundreds of people from this one settlement have fled to the garrison town after a UNITA attack. The first time, in 1987, they stayed in town briefly. The second time, in 1989, they stayed for three months, because UNITA had robbed their cattle and all their food, leaving them with nothing to eat and no way to plough their fields.

Ironically, the people living in this settlement repeatedly attacked by UNITA did not even want to be there. They had lived in remote rural areas and were forced to move into the settlement in 1983 by the government to "protect" them, and to deny a social base to UNITA.

People did not want to move because they knew that UNITA would attack the new settlement and because of the distance from their fields. Then six men who had been refusing to move were killed by the ODP, which came to their houses one morning and shot them there, according to a man who helped bury them. Resistance to the move evaporated.

As the villagers feared, their new settlement was attacked by UNITA. In the first attack, in 1984, 13 people (half of them civilians) were killed and four were taken away by UNITA, which was determined to build its social base, even if it had to rely on kidnapping. Some houses were burned, presumably to punish people for accompanying the MPLA.

In June 1985, there was a second attack. Twelve died, one was captured (all civilians) and some of the houses were burned. In May 1986, the third attack took place. No one died. UNITA took the cattle, clothes and food, and burned all the houses.

Then people discovered that UNITA was leaving mines after the attacks. Three men and one woman died from mine explosions, the first man in 1985 about five days after a UNITA attack. He had been walking on the road on the way to the hospital.

The next two men died after a UNITA attack in 1986. UNITA had left mines right next to a house belonging to an ODP man; two civilians came to visit and died. Another woman was killed when she stepped on a mine one day after a 1986 UNITA raid.

There were three attacks in 1990: in May, four civilians and one ODP were killed. UNITA took cattle and food and burned houses. In June, 14 ODP were killed. In December, 12 civilians and two ODP were killed.

Many Angolans are harshly critical of the government for devoting the lion's share of the country's budget to fight UNITA and allocating an insignificant percentage for the care of civilians; in the municipal hospital to which the wounded were taken, the employees had not been paid for five months. The hospital ambulance had not moved all day; the wounded were brought in by other villagers and a priest.

Due to UNITA attacks, the garrison town has electricity only from about 4 to 10 pm, if at all. There have been no doctors in the municipal hospital for eight years. Many patients lie on mats on the floor because there are not enough beds. In the emergency room there are no beds or

examining tables for the wounded, who are laid on the floor.

## **2. Case Two: Woman Captured by UNITA**

A mother, 30, told Africa Watch that in the early 1980s FAPLA ordered all the people in her village to move to the municipality because they were too dispersed, UNITA was threatening them, and FAPLA could not protect them.

At the time, UNITA had not actually attacked the village. They had entered the village, however, and taken away two young men. They killed one; the other, whom we will call Paulino, escaped and returned and told others about his experience. No one knew why the two young men were captured since they were not working for the military or the government; they were only rural men. Paulino had four children and a wife. After this, many young men started sleeping in the bush.

Then UNITA attacked the municipality to which they had to move; it had a FAPLA base. The people ran to the bush to hide. When they returned they found that many had been killed, both civilians and military, shot by UNITA.

There were mines around this town; the mother of Paulino was killed by a mine left by UNITA, accidentally detonating it one day after UNITA withdrew.

UNITA attacked the town on other occasions. During one of these attacks, they recaptured Paulino and took him away again. He never reappeared. During a 1987 UNITA attack, FAPLA carried away half the people, including four of this witness's children. UNITA took away the other half, including this woman and her infant, and many others of all ages. UNITA had pursued these people when they fled into the bush to hide. The villagers did not want to go with UNITA, but were taken to a UNITA camp, a four day walk. They lived in a settlement near the camp for a year. Escape was impossible because UNITA blocked the roads.

UNITA gave them seeds and put them to work farming. They had to hand over a quota of each product they grew to UNITA. There were no stores there, no money, no salt, no sugar, no fish. There was a school for children, however.

Then FAPLA attacked, UNITA withdrew, and FAPLA "recuperated" or "recovered" the civilians and took them off to government-controlled territory in December 1989.

## **3. Case Three: Repeated Attacks Drive Forcibly Relocated Villagers to Garrison Town**

UNITA started coming around a little, to organize, in 1976, in this widely dispersed farming area where 25-30,000 people lived.



The government started recruiting for the ODP in 1976. Service was obligatory for those over 30. All men under 30 had to enter the army, but many fled from the draft sweeps conducted by FAPLA, ODP and civilian MPLA members.

Starting in 1978, the ODP's duties became more onerous. Whereas at first they only had to guard the villages, they later had to go on the offensive on mixed patrols with the FAPLA, which lasted from five to 15 days. When not on patrol, ODP members had to serve at least one day a week.

In 1978-79, there were some UNITA ambushes on the roads. In 1980, UNITA captured a civilian member of MPLA, a chief of the village, at night at home. They killed him later that night with a machete.

UNITA also started to carry away ordinary people, sometimes whole families, who had nothing to do with politics or the government. Some came back to tell of their capture; one came back saying they had been well treated. The only ones who returned, however, were those who escaped.

Those escaping from UNITA were required to present themselves to be questioned by State Security, some for as long as one or two days.

UNITA's first attack here was in 1981. The ODP, the only force present, ran off; UNITA captured a lot of arms. One civilian was killed in combat; many were captured and taken away by UNITA. UNITA stole cows and burned about 100 houses.

In January 1982, the civilians were forced by FAPLA and the ODP to move. The MPLA "had to recuperate or recover people," one villager said, because UNITA had "recovered" over 1,000 people from the scattered huts by that time.

The ODP and FAPLA came to the village to gather up all the people, and ordered them to leave the same day. Some went voluntarily and others were forced. There was no preparation for the move; people had to abandon many possessions because they could not transport them on such short notice. These belongings were stolen by whichever troops passed through, UNITA or FAPLA, taking advantage of the villagers' absence.

After they were brought to the new settlement, the villagers had to walk a long distance to get back to their fields. Several people died en route, in ambushes, when they were walking alone. One villager believed they were ambushed because UNITA thought they were people "of the MPLA" since they were "recuperated" by the MPLA.

In April 1982, UNITA attacked the relocation settlement. UNITA captured two ODP alive and executed them. There were 13 killed in this attack; nine civilians, two executed ODP

and another two ODP killed in battle. Many others were wounded and kidnapped. UNITA robbed the cattle, clothing, and all valuable items they found in the houses from which the people had fled. They burned down almost all the recently built houses because they wanted people to stay in the dispersed areas to help supply food to UNITA.

The settlement was attacked monthly from May through August 1982.

The civilians were finally allowed by the authorities to move from the settlement back closer to their fields. The military made them build houses closer together, in neighborhoods, instead of living in scattered huts. They were required to have military posts in the neighborhoods.

There were continual attacks on these neighborhoods, about 10 or 15; the residents stopped counting after a while. UNITA always robbed them. All their cattle and oxen were taken. That is one reason why people eventually went to live in the garrison town: they could not farm without their animals.

The worst attack was in February 1989, when some 13,000 people fled to the garrison town 60 kilometers away.

UNITA stayed in the area for about three months, then withdrew. While UNITA was there, some people continued to live normally in the town.

A group decided not to return and live with UNITA, however, after UNITA killed five old men who were sent as emissaries to see if they could return, shortly after the attack. They were part of a larger group that had been hiding in the bush and was hungry.

UNITA ambushed and killed the five men, although they were visibly old and civilians. This was witnessed by other men who hung back to see what would happen. After that, no one wanted to return.

Thousands remained for three months in the garrison town, where some 260 became seriously malnourished. In June 1989, after UNITA withdrew from the area, they returned with a FAPLA contingent.

They rebuilt the neighborhoods but the situation was always the same, with some attacks. When these occurred, they would go to the larger settlement for a while, where there were more troops and less likelihood of attack.

The returned civilians suffered terribly from hunger. They were reduced to eating the roots of banana trees and the seeds a relief organization brought them to plant. The next shipment of seeds, November 1989, was burned by UNITA. Many died of starvation.

Many others were killed and wounded by UNITA mines left after attacks in the paths and roads leading to the larger settlement.

UNITA attacked the larger settlement in May 1990. No civilians were killed; a big contingent of FAPLA and ODP there engaged UNITA and made it possible for most of the civilians to escape unharmed. Then FAPLA and the ODP withdrew.

This attack was "the worst," villagers said. UNITA burned the houses. UNITA took the people who remained there to the UNITA base 40 kilometers away; they did not want people to stay in the MPLA neighborhoods.

According to relief statistics, over 4,000 people from the zone became malnourished by June 1990, after they were displaced and fled again to the garrison town, where they have remained.

#### **4. Case Four: FAPLA and UNITA Steal Food and Children**

In a village of 98 houses, the villagers raise corn. They used to have cattle but FAPLA soldiers based in the nearby town stole them.

The villagers have had to flee their village many times, first in 1983, most recently in June 1990.

Before 1983, things were quiet. The civilians briefly fled after FAPLA attacked UNITA and forced it out of the village. In that year, FAPLA also made the villagers leave to live in another village, to insure that they would not help UNITA. The next year, however, FAPLA permitted them to return to their village because of the problem of hunger.

One villager's son was forcibly recruited. He was taken six years ago at age 14, to serve as a "pioneer," by a FAPLA military chief. The boy did not want to go. But his father did not say anything, he told Africa Watch, because "one cannot say anything to a chief." (The boy has been back to visit his family.)

From 1984 to 1990, the villagers took up the practice of living at home during the day and sleeping at night in the bush, because of nocturnal UNITA attacks. Sleeping in the bush is especially difficult during the rains. When they heard there was to be an offensive, they fled to avoid problems.

There were six attacks by UNITA from 1984-90. The villagers let down their guard a little in 1986 when it seemed that things were calmer, and returned to sleep in their houses. Then UNITA attacked and killed two civilians. The man was shot in his bed, and the old woman was hacked to death with a machete.

They were also robbed but the houses were not burned: this was "normal," one villager said. UNITA never buys or pays for anything.

During daytime in 1986, two people were killed in the course of a cattle theft, the first such incident. Later that year, another man was killed while ploughing with oxen. He, his mother and his wife, working together, were captured by five men in uniform. The women were sent back by the uniformed men, who shot the captured man. FAPLA may have been responsible for these incidents.

The soldiers from both sides are hungry and they steal food from the civilian population. One villager complained that UNITA took his 10 cows in 1988; since then, he has not had enough money to buy more. Also in 1988, 10 men, all married, were taken by UNITA and made to herd the cattle that was stolen. The men never returned.

One villager's house was burned down five times in different UNITA attacks. There have been eight UNITA attacks on his village, he recalled.

In 1990 there were three attacks: in March, July and September. These were intense, or "too much," in the words of the villagers; in some other years, the attacks were "normal," defined by villagers as only attacks on the military.

UNITA kidnapped children ages 12 to 15 from this settlement in 1989, and continued to target children for capture in 1990. UNITA brought villagers to meetings for talks in 1990, before the series of three attacks. UNITA explained they were taking people not to kill them but so the young people could study and work with UNITA. (There was a school in the village, but when UNITA raided in 1987 they captured the teacher and took him against his will. No teacher has been assigned to this village since then. If the children want to study, they must go to the settlement. Many have stayed home.)

In September 1990, UNITA captured children as young as eight years. They deliberately chose these children; they did not take any older people. One witness saw UNITA capture his eight-year-old niece in the September raid and four other girls and one boy, all eight to 15 years old. UNITA discovered these six children together in the bush during the raid. One girl, Rosa, 15, escaped and returned to the village, saying the group had been taken to a UNITA base. This girl was then kidnapped again by UNITA, which came looking for her.

At the meetings held before the 1990 raids, UNITA counseled people not to be afraid. UNITA told them they wanted the people to stay in the villages to work in the fields. All the produce would be for the people themselves. If UNITA needed food, however, they must hand it over. UNITA also told the people not to leave; they would be killed if they did. People finally left, however, because UNITA was taking their children. No villager said anything during these meetings, which lasted about a half hour, as they were too afraid.

In September 1990, UNITA shot a 60-year-old man they thought was hiding from them, according to the man's cousin who witnessed the murder. When UNITA entered the settlement this older man fled into the bush. The witness saw 10 UNITA soldiers grab his cousin, who was trying to hide. They asked him, "Why are you running?"

"Because we are afraid that you will kill us," he replied. They made him take off his clothes, leaving him naked, and shot him once in the chest. He was standing when he was hit. The UNITA soldiers then left.

The day the older man was killed, UNITA searched through the bush and found many other people. Most were taken back to the village, where UNITA had just burned their homes.

UNITA told the villagers that they should stay in the village and farm. The witness commented that he did not know why UNITA burned their houses if they wanted them to stay. (It takes about one or two months working full time to build a simple house, including the time spent looking in the bush for building materials.)

Mines were usually left by UNITA. When UNITA attacked, FAPLA would withdraw. UNITA would sleep the night there and then depart, leaving mines behind. When they departed and FAPLA re-entered, soldiers would step on the mines and die. UNITA also would place mines in the roads where the military passed; these roads are also used by the civilians for vehicles and smaller paths for cattle.

In 1989, a boy of 10 found a mine on a path and started playing with it. It exploded, killing him. It was believed this was a UNITA mine because UNITA had attacked two days before, and FAPLA had not yet returned.

## **5. Case Five: Increasing Attacks, Increasing Poverty**

Before the war, villagers in this area grew corn, sweet potatoes, sisal and coffee. They had pigs, cows and goats. There was some production left over for sale by each family; they lived normally.

In 1978, UNITA started holding meetings with the people in villages about 20 kilometers from the center. "UNITA was only mobilizing the people and not doing anything bad," one farmer said, "and the people helped UNITA with contributions. UNITA said they wanted elections and some of the people agreed. Others were organized by the MPLA and did not agree. UNITA said the Cubans should leave. Communism did not work, they said."

People also had to attend MPLA political meetings. At those meetings, the MPLA talked about how the MPLA was founded and what it stood for. People complained that they were forced to miss church if the political meetings were at the same time; they also had to work on

Sundays in campaigns conducted by the MPLA, which recruited people to work on sisal and coffee plantations that were confiscated from the Portuguese who had fled the country. If they did not work, they would be punished by requiring them to work 15 days in the municipality, free, doing such jobs as cutting firewood and carrying water.

ODP was started in this area in 1977. Men in ODP worked in the barracks in shifts, divided into groups of 8 to 15 that each worked for one week. During this week, they were far from their fields and could not return to work them. Some guarded the commissar's office; others patrolled in the mountains.

The ODP was obligatory. If one did not appear, he would be punished by beating with a switch. Then he would have to dig trenches for the ODP. If he refused to work digging the trenches, he would not be given any food. Since the men were far from home they were dependent on the ODP for food.

In 1978, UNITA attacked a nearby coffee plantation where a FAPLA barracks was stationed for protection. There were also civilians living there. UNITA killed people, burned houses, and destroyed the civilians' possessions. There were four attacks on this site in 1978. UNITA would attack, leave, and FAPLA would return.

In 1978, UNITA also rustled cattle and burned houses belonging to the people living near the coffee plantation.

In 1980 UNITA started to attack the villages because of the ODP presence. In 1982 UNITA first attacked the center and in 1983 started to kidnap villagers after attacks.

Some villagers had started to leave an adjoining area because they were afraid they would be imprisoned by FAPLA. In this area, UNITA would arrive, mobilize, and leave. When FAPLA entered the same area on patrol, MPLA sympathizers would denounce UNITA's presence and those who cooperated with them, leading FAPLA to punish those people. Some were sent to prison, and several died there. UNITA would try to find out who denounced their followers, capture them and "impose the death penalty" or summarily execute them, at night, in their houses.

In this zone, starting in 1983, FAPLA burned more houses than UNITA to force civilians to leave.

"It got so that no one could stay," a villager said. UNITA supporters and FAPLA supporters ran in every direction. Everyone left the area, a productive agricultural zone.

In 1985, a villager suffered when his house was robbed by UNITA, which returned to his locality after an attack on four nearby villages. UNITA only came to his village to steal clothes, chickens, food, and cattle. The nearest military post was three kilometers away, and it was not

attacked.

All the clothing in his house and all the food were taken, as well as the cutlery and plates. The house was not burned down but they did burn a chair.

This same villager also suffered at the hands of the government in that same year. He was detained in January 1985 for one week by State Security with his older brother and a nephew. Almost every day they were beaten with switches on the head and body; he still has scars on his head. State Security was trying to force them to say where UNITA was located.

They were kept in a room during the night and during the day they were confined to the grounds. They slept on the ground and received only the food their family brought. They were released after one week through family connections.

In the 1987 UNITA attack, eight civilians were injured and three were killed. UNITA captured a few people, burned 69 houses and took away the cattle, clothes, and food.

The problem of FAPLA stealing from the civilians started here in 1990. FAPLA was garrisoned in the center but as they did not have any food, they went to the villages and fields and picked the corn from the stalks.

The nephew of one witness was killed in the fields, trying to guard his fields three and a half kilometers from the center against robberies. It is believed he was shot dead by FAPLA. They were the only ones allowed to carry guns and UNITA was not in the area at the time, December 1989. The residents found his body in the cornfield, which had been plundered.

Since then, others guarding their fields have been shot dead by those trying to rob corn.

In May 1990, UNITA mounted its strongest attack to date. UNITA stayed in the center for six days while the people all fled to the bush. FAPLA was there at the time of the attack, but it seems that no soldiers were killed. They fled without resistance.

Two civilians were killed. UNITA robbed food that belonged to the state and food from the people's houses and took their cattle. They burned all the houses within a two kilometers radius but did not capture any people. They withdrew after six days and FAPLA returned.

In June 1990, while FAPLA was there, UNITA attacked again, and stole cattle and robbed houses. This time UNITA also carried away boys and girls ages 14-16. One girl escaped and reported to the villagers that UNITA told the captured adolescents they were to be taken to study. In the government-controlled center, there are school buildings but the young people do not study because of lack of food.

During this attack no civilians were killed, but four pastors were wounded by UNITA

while its forces were stealing cattle; the pastors were wounded in an effort to make them give up the cattle.

UNITA was in the area for 21 days, then left. People started to return. FAPLA returned but ODP did not.

UNITA continued to rob clothing, food and cattle. It is especially hard on the civilians when they lose their clothes. They have had to ask the priest for help.

When FAPLA enters, they also rob, and they are worse. They take large objects: tables, bicycles, everything. Now there is nothing left to rob.

Half of the people are now in the garrison town, displaced. Those who did not go to the garrison town but remained behind work in the fields during the day and sleep in the bush at night, even when it is raining, to avoid FAPLA. Life in the garrison town is too hard for them because there are no fields.

## **6. Case Six: Mass Displacement**

There was fighting during April 1976 inside the center of this zone. FAPLA occupied the area and UNITA tried to get back in, but it could not.

There was a FAPLA base in the center since 1976 and ODP since 1977. UNITA started attacking the villages in 1978. There were no troops stationed there at the time, but UNITA attacked because they thought that the people supported MPLA, which was not always the case. The villages were relocated and concentrated close to the center in 1979 because FAPLA did not trust the people, and also because they were afraid to leave them there alone after the UNITA attacks started in 1978. Some people had to evacuate their villages on the same day that FAPLA arrived and gave the order.

By 1979, they had been robbed of all their cattle. But they still had grains, pigs and chickens.

UNITA returned to attack the center in 1981-83. In 1984 there was a big UNITA attack in which many died. About half of the people retreated to a Catholic mission together with the troops; the others were taken to the bush by UNITA, some voluntarily, some not. There was more than one attack in 1984. People fled to the bush when the attacks started at dawn and returned a few hours later. On return, they found that their clothes, food and animals (pigs, chickens, oxen, goats) had been stolen by UNITA, and their houses burned.

In the mid-1980s the ICRC began airlifting food to this center to prevent starvation.



FAPLA located mines in the small paths where UNITA passed, far from the MPLA villages. They did this when they were on patrol and found paths that belonged to UNITA's troops, according to a former ODP member.

In March 1990 UNITA attacked for the fourth time. About 20 were killed but they were not buried because the people could not return, fearing UNITA's presence.

The people spent three days in the bush en route to the Catholic Mission some 50 kilometers away. They were slowed down by hunger and children. On the second day, about noon, UNITA ambushed many fleeing civilians, injuring several. FAPLA was withdrawing together with the people, but the people outnumbered FAPLA. There were 12,000 civilians and 200 FAPLA in the center.

UNITA captured some civilians and took them away to porter stolen goods. These captured men were released after one day.

Over 7,000 civilians took refuge in the Catholic mission. There, some two to four children died each day because they had no shelter from the rain and no food. The situation stabilized but in October 1990 volunteer doctors stopped coming after a mine was found on the road to the mission.

UNITA may still be in the center; the residents do not know since they never returned. They asked permission to return to live near their fields, but FAPLA refused, saying that they can return only when there is peace.

## **7. Case Seven: State Security Detainee**

An educated man in his 50s, whom we will call José, was arrested in March 1984. He was detained until November 1989.

José had no attorney. His case was never taken to court. He never saw a judge throughout the over five and a half years he was in custody.

State Security arrested him at his home in a town at 1 am, surrounding his house. Six military entered and took him away, in the fashion in which they made all their arrests. There was a big roundup in the town that night. Several others from his church were also arrested.

He was interrogated until 4 am, along with seven others. He was accused of taking money to UNITA people receiving medical treatment in town, who then went to rejoin UNITA. He was also accused of requisitioning cars for UNITA, and of helping to direct a recent attack on a nearby municipality. He denied all the accusations.

He was detained in the town for two weeks. He was then sent to the provincial capital where he spent seven months in inhumane conditions in a detention center run by State Security. Some 40-50 men were crammed into one small room and had to sleep sitting up on the floor, in the same spot where they spent the day. The one toilet was in the same room.

They were given a little food twice a day, but it was not enough and their families had to bring food. This was limited to fruit (the authorities would not permit cooked food). The detainees could have five minute visits from their family twice a week; the purpose was basically to deliver food.

He was interrogated seven times in the provincial capital. He was hit on one occasion by an officer there, who accused him of lying. He was hit on the head for about five minutes with fists and still suffers from headaches as a result of this experience.

He refused to talk or to admit the allegations, however, and was not hit again. The same day he was beaten, he was given a statement to sign, which he read and then signed because he was satisfied that it reflected what he said. He believed it would lead to his release.

After the interrogation was finished and he signed the statement, he was put in a very small room that had a latrine.

Two weeks later, he was sent to the prison farm at Bentiaba (also known as São Nicolás) in Namibe province. He was called out of his cell, told to go to the cell for the condemned men, and informed that he was being sent to Bentiaba, which is also administered by State Security.

He says that he was "sentenced" to four years in jail by State Security, and was notified only after he reached Bentiaba that he was in for four years. This is an "administrative penalty" used for people whose case is not sent to trial (for lack of evidence). The condemned man does not get credit for time served in detention pre-"sentencing."

He was actually in custody over seven months in the provincial capital plus four years in Bentiaba prison, plus another nine months in Bentiaba, waiting for them to release him after he had served his sentence. The authorities in the provincial capital had to authorize his release, and they were slow about it.

In Bentiaba, each prisoner has a small house. This prison farm was created by the Portuguese, and some of the houses date from Portuguese times. Others were built of straw or adobe by the prisoners. The prison farm is surrounded on all sides by the sea and the mountains, where there are guards stationed on top. It is impossible to escape.

The prisoners are not locked up at this farm but live in individual houses. Everyone works, at a trade or in the fields.

When he was there, there were about 5,000 prisoners, of whom some 67 were women. Most were "political prisoners" but there were a few diamond traffickers. Most of the "politicals" were from the east and south of the country; few were from the north. The majority were in the prison farm serving the "administrative penalty" decreed by State Security, that is, without trial.

For the first two years of his term, families could visit for a period of eight days once every month, and bring children and food. The families wanted to stay longer because they had to travel so far, and transport is so uncertain.

The wives staged what appears to have been a sit-in, and the prison authorities expelled them. As a result of this revolt, however, the authorities in Luanda decided to let the families stay as long as they wanted. For the past few years the women could come and go from the prison, looking for food and other supplies for the family in the nearby towns.

The prisoners did not get much food, although they are engaged in growing large quantities. If a prisoner refused to be part of the work gang, he was punished by a beating and put in a punishment cell (a small room).

The state provided only two kilos of rice to each prisoner per month and one to two kilos of fuba (corn meal). Once in a while they received beans and soap. Prisoners had their own gardens and some sold food. Before the reforms, the authorities occasionally dug up the gardens.

In 1986, 12 men died from hunger at the prison farm: they had come in a weak condition from the provincial capital, where they had received no food and had never been in the sun.

Bibles and religious literature were not allowed inside the prison. They had religious services only when someone died and there was a funeral.

\* \* \*

This report was written by Jemera Rone of Africa Watch, who visited Angola in November and December 1990. A longer report on this trip is in preparation.

### **Other Africa Watch Publications on Angola:**

Angola: Violations of the Laws of War by Both Sides, An Africa Watch Report, April 1989.

*Africa Watch is a non-governmental organization created in May 1988 to monitor human rights practices in Africa and to promote respect for internationally recognized standards. Its Chairman is William Carmichael. The Executive Director of Africa Watch is Rakiya Omaar; Richard Carver is the Research Director; Alex de Waal is Research Consultant; Janet Fleischman and Karen Sorensen are Research Associates; Jo Graham and Ben Penglase are Associates.*

*Africa Watch is part of Human Rights Watch, an organization that also comprises Americas Watch, Asia Watch, Helsinki Watch and Middle East Watch. The Chairman of Human Rights Watch is Robert L. Bernstein and the Vice-Chairman is Adrian DeWind. Aryeh Neier is Executive Director of Human Rights Watch; the Deputy Director is Kenneth Roth; Holly Burkhalter is the Washington Director; Susan Osnos is Press Director, Jemera Rone is Counsel to Human Rights Watch.*