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# ANGOLA

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## Republic of Angola

**Population:** 15.9 million (8.5 million under 18)

**Government armed forces:** 107,000

**Compulsory recruitment age:** 20

**Voluntary recruitment age:** 18 for men, 20 for women

**Voting age:** 18

**Optional Protocol:** acceded 11 October 2007

**Other treaties ratified (see glossary):**

CRC, GC AP I, ILO 138, ILO 182, ACRWC

*Child soldiers were used extensively during the 27-year civil war by both government armed forces and the armed opposition group UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola, National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), and were also used by the armed separatist Cabinda Liberation Front (Frente de Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda, FLEC). There were no reports of under-18s currently being recruited into the armed forces.*

## Context

Stability increased following the April 2002 signing of the Luena Peace Accords by the government and UNITA. An estimated 4.5 million people were internally displaced during the conflict and some 450,000 fled to neighbouring countries.<sup>1</sup> By December 2006 a UN refugee repatriation program had resulted in the return of over 400,000 refugees,<sup>2</sup> but an estimated 100,000 people remained internally displaced.<sup>3</sup>

Low-intensity fighting continued in the oil-rich province of Cabinda between government forces and armed factions of the FLEC.<sup>4</sup> In August 2004 FLEC-FAC (Forças Armadas de Cabinda, Cabindan Armed Forces) and FLEC-Renovada (Renewed) merged, and with the Catholic Church and civil society groups formed the Cabindan Forum for Dialogue (Forum Cabindés para o Diálogo, FCD). FCD-led negotiations with the government resulted in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding for Peace and Reconciliation for the province of Cabinda in August 2006. However, the agreement was rejected by a majority of the groups in the FCD.<sup>5</sup>

The memorandum provided for special status for Cabinda and an amnesty for military crimes and crimes against the security of the state committed in the context of the armed conflict in that province.<sup>6</sup> It also provided for the demobilization and integration of FLEC troops

into the armed forces.<sup>7</sup> Political and military tension continued and in May 2007 sporadic small-scale attacks by FLEC forces that had remained active increased.<sup>8</sup> On 1 August 2007 they changed their name to the Liberation Front of the State (as opposed to ‘Enclave’) of Cabinda.

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## Government

### National recruitment legislation and practice

Under the constitution it was the right and highest duty of every citizen to defend the country, military service was compulsory, and the manner in which it was fulfilled was established by law. Under Law 1/93, military service was compulsory for all men aged between 20 and 45. Women over 20 could also volunteer to join. Recruitment started at 18, with registration under the military census. Those who failed to register were subject to unspecified sanctions, which in practice amounted to the payment of fines.

Under Article 8.3 of Law 1/93, the National Assembly was empowered to decree the military call-up of citizens from the age of 18 in the case of a national emergency and at the request of the Council of Ministers. The law also stipulated that military service was for two years, but the National Assembly could extend or reduce the term by a year if needed and if “conditions of service permit”. The law provided for conscientious objectors to perform civilian service. Decree No. 40/96 of 13 December 1996, on the application of military service, established a minimum age of 18 for the voluntary recruitment of men.

Recruitment into the armed forces was suspended during 2002 and 2003 but resumed in 2004.<sup>9</sup> Former child soldiers were exempt from compulsory military service, although they could still be recruited on a voluntary basis.<sup>10</sup>

### Child recruitment and deployment

From late 2002 there were no reports of children being recruited into the armed forces or being used by the armed forces in the fighting in Cabinda.<sup>11</sup>

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## Armed groups

Both FLEC-FAC and FLEC-Renovada had recruited children during the war, some as young as eight, and at least 30 per cent of them were girls.<sup>12</sup> More recent information on the recruitment of children by FLEC was not available.

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## Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR)

The demobilization and reintegration of former UNITA fighters was completed by December

2005, by which time almost 100,000 combatants had been demobilized. Thousands benefited from government programs of social reintegration, particularly in agricultural projects. In March 2007, 30,000 soldiers in the armed forces were also demobilized.<sup>13</sup> In total, around 300,000 government and former UNITA soldiers had been demobilized since the first peace agreement of May 1991.<sup>14</sup>

The quartering (provision of lodgings) of FLEC soldiers was declared completed in November 2006 with the cantonment and disarming of between 500 and 1,800 soldiers.<sup>15</sup> There were no reports that child soldiers were among them. Ammunition and hundreds of weapons were decommissioned and destroyed in January 2007 when FLEC's military organization was formally dismantled. Of its members, 615 were incorporated into the Angolan armed forces, 113 joined the Angolan National Police and 131 were either retired or returned to civilian life.<sup>16</sup> No information was provided on specific packages for the social reintegration of those demobilized.

The "Post-war Child Protection Strategy" adopted by the government in 2002 ended in 2006. The program involved the reintegration into society of more than 3,000 children, including former child soldiers. The children received skills training, assistance with civil registration and access to social assistance.<sup>17</sup>

Despite attempts by the police to collect weapons left over from the war, the number of weapons in civilian hands as of March 2006 was estimated at between 2.5 and 4 million.<sup>18</sup> Landmines remained a threat, particularly to children, who continued to be killed and maimed, albeit to a lesser extent in recent years. Non-governmental organizations working on mine clearance estimated that there were 500,000 landmines still to clear.<sup>19</sup> On 31 May 2007 the government announced that it had completed the destruction of its 83,557 stockpiled landmines in accordance with the Ottawa Convention.<sup>20</sup>

## Developments

Angola presented its initial report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on 4 June 2004. In considering the report, the Committee welcomed Angola's efforts to strengthen the protection of children's rights. It also welcomed the ratification in 2001 of the ILO Minimum Age Convention 138 and the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 182 and of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in July 2003. The Committee expressed concern about the inadequate attention given to the plight of child soldiers, especially girls, in the context of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants.<sup>21</sup>

In June 2004 it was widely reported that Angolan troops had been deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The

Angolan authorities denied the reports, but confirmed that the government had agreed to a request by the DRC to help train its police and army.<sup>22</sup>

## International standards

Angola acceded to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict on 11 October 2007. The accompanying declaration stated that "the inclusion of persons in the Angolan Army, as appropriate, is done upon their reaching 20 years of age, and the minimum age for voluntary enlistment is 18 years".<sup>23</sup>

- 1 World Bank, "Angola: Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration Project, February 2003", Report No. PID 11534, www.worldbank.org.
- 2 Embassy of the Republic of Angola in the United Kingdom, *Angola News*, No. 120, December 2006–January 2007.
- 3 US State Department, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Angola – 2006, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, 6 March 2007.
- 4 Human Rights Watch (HRW), "Angola", *Human Rights Watch World Report 2005*.
- 5 *Semário Angolense*, 4 September 2006.
- 6 *Ibinda*, 26 October 2006, www.ibinda.org.
- 7 *Amnesty International Report 2007*.
- 8 *Jornal Apostolado*, 30 July 2007.
- 9 Order issued by the Minister of Defence, read on Rádio Nacional de Angola on 5 January 2004 and quoted by the BBC.
- 10 Minister of Social Welfare, *Mesa Redonda sobre os desafios da Protecção da Criança, no Processo de Reintegração*, 7 March 2003.
- 11 HRW, *Forgotten Fighters: Child Soldiers in Angola*, April 2003.
- 12 Institute of Security Studies, Country Profiles: Angola, 8 November 2002, www.iss.co.za.
- 13 *Jornal de Angola*, 8 December 2005; *Agora*, 24 March 2007; and *Angola News*, above note 2, No. 123, April 2007.
- 14 *A Capital*, 28 April–5 May 2007.
- 15 Figures vary. For instance, *Jornal de Angola*, 5 October and 11 November 2006, and Angola Press Agency, 10 November 2006, refer to 500 soldiers. Another report by *Jornal de Angola* on 28 November 2006 refers to 1,804 soldiers.
- 16 *Angola News*, above note 2, No. 120, December 2006–January 2007.
- 17 Confidential source, February 2007.
- 18 IRIN, 13 March 2006, quoting the Pretoria-based Institute of Security Studies.
- 19 US State Department, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Angola – 2005, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, 8 March 2006; Initial report of Angola to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, UN Doc. CRC/C/3/Add.66, 10 August 2004.

- 20 *Angola News*, above note 2, No. 120, December 2006–January 2007; EFE (Spanish Press Agency), 31 May 2007.
- 21 Committee on the Rights of the Child, Consideration of report submitted by Angola, Concluding observations, UN Doc. CRC/C/15/Add.246, 1 October 2004.
- 22 Radio France Internationale (RFI) on 8 June 2004, quoted by the BBC; AFP, 25 June 2004.
- 23 Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, [www2.ohchr.org](http://www2.ohchr.org).