

The War is Over: The Crisis of Angola's Internally Displaced Continues

Testimonies from Displaced Persons, 2000 and 2001

UNITA Abuses

During the final years of the war UNITA rebels kept civilians under a strict control through the use of violence and terror, including killing, mutilation, rape, use of landmines, abduction for fighting and forced labor, torture, and pillage.

In October 1999, the FAA [the Forças Armadas Angolanas, the government army] passed through on their way to Bailundo, Bié. UNITA did not want the people to go to the government side, so they took us to the *mata* [bush], where we lived with UNITA for eight months, until May 2000. There were many villages that were also taken to the mata to live with UNITA. The people were divided into groups of ten or fifteen where we stayed and built grass huts about five kilometers from our village. We did not plant any *lavras* [fields] there, but would go back to our fields to collect food.... We all lived together with the UNITA soldiers, giving them food and working for them in their lavras and carting things.¹

In the mata, there was no place to stay. Always moving. Sometimes we would stay one day. Other times, two days. Sometimes we just kept going all day.... In the mata, my son who was two months old had trouble breathing for several days and then he died.²

I arrived in Cangandala on November 5 [2000].... We come from Zonga and had to leave because UNITA come twice in the past months.... During these raids the young fled to the mata and the older people and children stayed in the village. In the last visit UNITA came into the village and beat and killed people saying "You followed them [the army], but now you are here alone and you will suffer for what you have done."³

We could not come before now [to Malanje] because UNITA would not let anybody leave the area. They made check points and planted mines. My sister was killed a while ago by a mine.⁴

After they lost Andulo they started warning us that if the government took Belo Horizonte no one could leave to town and the ones who would go to stay with the government could not come back to their fields. But until this happened to me no one really thought that they would go so far.... They tied me up around my feet, my knees and around my wrists too. They put me on my knees and put my hands on a

¹Testimony from international humanitarian agency (name withheld on request), displaced father of four from Cuanza Sul, November 2000.

²Testimony from international humanitarian agency (name withheld on request), thirty-eight-year-old displaced woman from Cuanza Sul, January 2001.

³Testimony from international humanitarian agency (name withheld on request), displaced man in Malanje, November 2000.

⁴Testimony from international humanitarian agency (name withheld on request), November 2000.

tree branch that was lying on the floor. They separated my hands and one soldier hit me five times with a *catana* [long knife used to cut the bush] in my right forearm and it fell on the floor ... They told me to stand up, and the same guy cut my right ear off and threw it on the ground.... Then they told me to leave, to go away and show it to the others in Belo Horizonte.⁵

While in jail [in Catabola town, after being captured by UNITA], the women were allowed to bring us food once a day. Later, the women told us that the [UNITA] soldiers had raped them when we were in prison.⁶

In Dumba Quicala [where I was living with my family after having fled our village] UNITA would round up women and take them to a house and make them be a “girlfriend.” If you refused, they would kill you.... It didn’t matter if you were already married, or even old. They did that to me one time. Yes, they raped me.⁷

UNITA would come and take the young boys and girls...The girls are taken to carry the babies of UNITA, fetch water and cook for them. The boys are taken to collect firewood, carry UNITA’s food and weapons and they are trained to become UNITA soldiers.⁸

The FAA took control of Cambundi Catembo in November 1999. Then UNITA attacked and burnt twelve *bairros* [parts of the village, quarters].... UNITA said that they burned the village because people were informing the FAA about their positions. They [UNITA] have a base in Maxito and used to collect food and people for their purposes. They killed the *soba* [traditional chief] Kakunga and kidnapped children.⁹

In other testimonies, internally displaced persons told of further abuses. Those living in the Catepa area, in Malanje, spoke about many young girls being raped in April 2001 in Talamungongo, when UNITA attacked and burned all the houses. One displaced had witnessed fifteen-year-old girls being sexually exploited by UNITA troops.¹⁰ In August 2000, a group of fisherman managed to escape from UNITA forces after they were caught returning to Bembo, in Malanje and were warned by UNITA that they [the local population] had joined the government and deserved to die.¹¹ One woman, who used to go to her fields in Gamba from Belo Horizonte, both in Bié province, had her ear cut off by UNITA rebels.¹² One thirty-eight-year-old displaced woman from Cuanza Sul said that UNITA started maiming people in Mussende when they found

⁵Testimony from international humanitarian agency (name withheld on request) internally displaced person from Cunhinga Municipality, Bie Province, May 2000.

⁶Testimony from international humanitarian agency (name withheld on request), displaced person from Chipeta commune, Catabola, Bié, May 2000.

⁷Testimony from international humanitarian agency (name withheld on request), displaced mother of two from Malanje, November 2000.

⁸Testimony from international humanitarian agency (name withheld on request), small group of new arrivals in Malanje, November 2000.

⁹Human Rights Watch interview, internally displaced persons in Cambondo, Malanje, Angola, May 2001.

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch interview, internally displaced persons in Catepa, Malanje, May 2001.

¹¹Testimony from international humanitarian agency (name withheld on request), forty-five-year-old displaced father of two from Bembo, Malanje, October 2000.

¹²Testimony from international humanitarian agency (name withheld on request), displaced from Nharea, Bié, May 2000.

them on the paths to the fields, making it impossible for them to leave. They even cut open civilians' chests and took out their hearts.¹³

Angolan Army and Police Abuses

During the last two years of the war the armed forces were also responsible for many abuses, including extra-judicial killings, sexual violence against women, and indiscriminate beatings. Soldiers guarding camps for the internally displaced also abused those they were supposed to be protecting.

On March 29, 2000, I left home alone to go to the fields. Around 11 in the morning I was weeding the grass around my field when I saw a policeman, wearing the full blue uniform, coming in my direction. When he was about ten meters from me he shot at me. The bullet crossed my right knee. The man did not say a word to me. After what happened to me I heard about similar cases. I heard that the police also shot at a young man from Trumba in March. He had both legs wounded by one bullet. I think that some chiefs in the police do consent and even give orders to fire against civilians, and others don't really care.¹⁴

One day, the FAA [army] came to a village. They went to the house of some people and took the women and children. They took them to Jamba, but they took all the men of this house, four men and even the nine-year-old boy and shot them all. And these men were just farmers there, living on the side of UNITA because they had no choice; these men didn't know anything about UNITA, but FAA killed them all the same. Some people here wanted to go with FAA, but when they arrived they just ran to the bush because they are afraid that they would be killed too.¹⁵

When the army arrive, the elderly, girls and children are moved to the municipality, [the young men are kept] because the surroundings are difficult areas to control and they need informers. Two years ago, in Cuimba, Zaire province, the internally displaced persons were forcibly taken to the center, after beating them up and raping women. This has also happened to the wife of one catechist.¹⁶

Last week [May 2001], a group of armed men came to our *bairro*. They were wearing FAA uniforms. They forced us to take the zinc roofing off our homes. Then they forced us to carry it, along with beds and other household things, to Malanje. If you did not carry it, they beat you. It took us four days to bring it here to Malanje. Then they told us to leave it, over near the market.¹⁷

¹³Testimony from international humanitarian agency (name withheld on request), thirty-eight-year-old displaced person from Cuanza Sul, January 2001.

¹⁴ Testimony from international humanitarian agency (name withheld on request) IDP from Cunhinga Municipality, Bie Province, May 2000.

¹⁵ Testimony from international humanitarian agency (name withheld on request) internally displaced man from Kuvango Municipality, Huila Province, February 2001.

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, religious worker from Zaire Province, Moxico, Angola, May 2001.

¹⁷ Testimony from international humanitarian agency (name withheld on request), small group of new arrivals in Malanje, January 2001.

In September 2000, three soldiers and a sergeant, wearing uniform and armed, came to the camp and wanted us [camp vice-coordinator and a teacher] to give them food and other items. They tied our hands and hit us a few times. They did not succeed and later we went to complain with their commander. Finally, they were placed into another area and have never come back here again.¹⁸

These stories were echoed in many other accounts. In February 2001, between Lago Dilolo and Luacano communes, several soldiers and a sergeant stopped a displaced man with his daughter with the intention of raping her. The man tried to prevent this but was shot in the leg. Taken wounded to the Luena hospital, he died in May 2000.¹⁹ His daughter was repeatedly raped. Cases of rape were also reported in November 2000 by new arrivals from Mussende in the Cangandala area.²⁰ In May 2001, a soldier entered the Cavango camp at night, beat and almost raped a woman and stole her food. This was not an isolated case. Soldiers regularly walked through the camp during the day to spot single women and return at night to rape them.²¹ Harassment, threats, looting and pillage have been frequently reported. On January 15, 2001, eleven Catholic catechists coming to Luena from Sautar, in Malanje, were stopped at an army checkpoint some eight kilometers from the city, and ordered to hand over all their belongings because, according to the soldiers, they had contributed to UNITA.²² In February 2001 in the Catepa area, in Malanje, groups of soldiers attacked houses hosting IDPs, scaring the people and stealing their belongings.²³ In Malanje, the police targeted adolescents for extortion. Unable to provide bribes several of the adolescents were stabbed by police officers. Several of them were hospitalized.²⁴

¹⁸Human Rights Watch interview, internally displaced persons, Sangondo II camp, Moxico, Angola, May 2001.

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch interview, displaced persons in Sangondo II camp, Angola, May 2001.

²⁰Human Rights Watch interview, internally displaced persons in Catepa, Malange, Angola, May 2001.

²¹Human Rights Watch interview, internally displaced persons, Cavango, Moxico, Angola, May 2001.

²²Human Rights Watch interview, religious leader, Angola, May 2001.

²³Human Rights Watch interview, internally displaced persons in Catepa, Malange, Angola, May 2001.

²⁴Human Rights Watch interview, religious worker, Malanje, Angola, May 2001.