AI INDEX: AFR/12/01/97 **News Service: 06/97**
13 JANUARY 1997
EXTERNAL: FOR RESPONSE ONLY
ANGOLA: Visit of Diana, Princess of Wales, to Angola for the British Red Cross

Angola holds the world 'record' for the highest number of people who have had limbs amputated as a result of mine injuries. An estimated 12 million mines were planted during the 20-year civil war, killing tens of thousands, mostly unarmed civilians.

During the war thousands of civilians were deliberately killed by both sides -- both demonstrated flagrant lack of respect for the right to life of the people of Angola on whose behalf they each claimed to be fighting.

A peace agreement was concluded in 1991 but war resumed in late 1992 after the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) disputed UN supervised elections in September 1992. A new peace agreement was signed in Lusaka in November 1994.

Many hundreds of UNITA suspects were rounded up by the government and imprisoned or killed in the three months following the UN supervised elections held in September 1992.

In July last year a South African de-mining team working near Soyo in north-western Angola found the remains of at least 60 skeletons who were the victims of deliberate and arbitrary killings. Local residents said that the victims were probably among those abducted by UNITA which occupied the area in May 1993 and held it for about a year. However, there has been no forensic or judicial investigation to determine the identity of the victims and perpetrators or the circumstances in which they were killed.

The UN peace-keeping mission is due to end in February, though a residual UN team will remain. The peace remains fragile. A Government of National Unity and Reconciliation is due to be set up on 23 January but the context remains one of bitterness, mistrust and lack of accountability on both sides. Amnesty International is concerned that there may be another human rights catastrophe and has been calling on the UN and the parties to the peace agreement to set up an independent and impartial body to monitor and ensure protection of human rights.

In December 1996 the UN Security Council passed a resolution in which it emphasised the need for respect for human rights and called on the Angolan parties to "give greater attention to preventing incidents of human rights abuse, investigating alleged human rights violations, and punishing those found guilty by due process of law". The Security Council called for a "follow-on UN presence" human rights monitors.

Amnesty International welcomes this and will be urging the UN to ensure that the monitors are given adequate powers and facilities to enable them to provide adequate protection for human rights. The UN should ensure that the Angolan peace process is not considered complete until there is such protection - the peace cannot last without respect for human rights.

AI welcomes the attention which will be focused on the victims of war as a result of the Princess of Wales' visit. For 20 years there has been an onslaught against the right to life in Angola --

we hope that her visit will emphasise the need for Angola's political leaders to take responsibility for the right to life of all Angolans.