

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 12/06/97

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 10 per Section.

EXTRA 65/97

Fear of refoulement / Fear for safety

9 May 1997

ANGOLA

Rwandese refugees on Zaire/Angola border

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There are fears that Rwandese refugees, including women and children, who have been trying to cross into the northeast of Angola from Zaire are being prevented from seeking asylum in Angola. Others who have entered Angola may not have had an adequate opportunity to seek asylum and some may have been returned to Zaire.

On 24 April 1997 the Angolan Interior Minister, Andre Pitra "Petroff", announced that border controls were being reinforced to prevent large numbers of refugees from crossing into the country. Despite this, some managed to cross into the Angolan border town of Dundo where 24 men, who were reported to have used arms to force their way into Angola, were detained. At least 500 refugees are reported to have crossed into areas controlled by the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA), National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, where Angolan government authority has not yet been reestablished in accordance with the terms of the Angola peace agreement. The Angolan authorities have prevented the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) from gaining access to the refugees.

Amnesty International is gravely concerned that the Angolan authorities are breaking their treaty obligations under the principle of non-*refoulement* and returning people to a country (Zaire) where they are at risk of serious human rights abuses.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The majority of the refugees are Rwandese Hutu who fled into Zaire from Rwanda in July 1994 and since late 1996 have been fleeing from the advancing forces of the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la liberation du Congo-Zaire* (AFDL), Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, led by Laurent-Desiré Kabila. AFDL forces, reportedly in collusion with members of the Tutsi-dominated Rwandese Patriotic Army, are reported to have killed thousands of refugees and Zairean Hutu since October 1996.

There are persistent reports that the Angolan government has provided the AFDL with military and other assistance and that UNITA has assisted the Zairean government in its resistance to the AFDL advance.

Angola became a party to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1981 and the 1969 the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa in 1982.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in Portuguese or your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that Rwandese refugees are being denied protection by the Angolan authorities;

- appealing to the Angolan authorities to ensure that the asylum-seekers are given access to the UNHCR and screened in accordance with international standards so that any undeserving of international protection can be identified;
- seeking assurances that Angola will abide by its international obligations (under the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa) to protect refugees and not to return them to a country where they would be at risk.

**APPEALS TO:**

*Note: Faxing to Angola can be difficult. If unable to obtain a tone, please try later.*

Interior Minister

Sua Excelência André Santana Pitra "Petroff"  
Ministro do Interior  
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**Fax: (+244 2) 39 25 32**

**Telegrams: Ministro do Interior, Luanda, Angola**

**Salutation: Excelência / Your Excellency**

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sua Excelência Venâncio da Silva Moura  
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Minister of Social Assistance

Sua Excelência Albino Malungo  
Ministro de Assistencia e Reinserção Social  
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Rua 17 de Setembro  
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**Telegrams: Ministro Albino Malungo, Luanda, Angola**

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and to diplomatic representatives of Angola accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat,  
or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 June 1997.