

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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> Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests

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16 January 2014

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Angola: information on the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda - Armed Forces of Cabinda (FLEC-FAC), including their relations with the authorities; information on the treatment of people associated with the organization by the authorities (2013)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Overview

Sources report that the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda - Armed Forces of Cabinda (*Frente de Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda - Forças Armadas Cabinda* - FLEC-FAC) is a faction of FLEC (Good Governance Africa Dec. 2013, 57; Freedom House 2013; AI 2011).

According to the International Crisis Group, FLEC was founded in 1963 and has been "fighting for the independence of Cabinda since Angola became independent in 1975" (International Crisis Group, 11 July 2012, 4). Cabinda is a province in Angola (Good Governance Africa Dec. 2013, 55; AI 2011).

In December 2013, an article in *Africa in Fact*, the journal published by Good Governance Africa, a research and advocacy organization that works to improve government practices in African countries (Good Governance Africa n.d.), reported that FLEC was "a faint shadow of the one-time muscled guerrilla movement that in the 1980s controlled, some estimated, as much as 70% of [Cabinda]" (ibid. Dec. 2013). According to Good Governance Africa, FLEC has been "characterised by splits since its inception;" there were at least four separate FLEC factions, whose various exiled leaders are scattered across Europe (ibid.). Good Governance Africa reports that according to estimates, there are fewer than 200 to 2,000 FLEC militants on the ground (ibid.). Information to corroborate the details provided by Good Governance Africa could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Good Governance Africa also provided the following details on FLEC-FAC:

- FLEC-FAC was formed in the 1980s.
- Its leader, Nzita Henriques Tiago, who is one of FLEC's founders, is based in Paris.
- In August 2010, Alexandre Tati, Mr. Tiago's then chief of staff, and Stanislas Boma, then FLEC-FAC vice-president, unsuccessfully attempted to seize control of the group and then broke away to form a small splinter group known as "FLEC de Tati," based in the Republic of Congo and Cabinda. Mr. Tati and Mr. Boma are "the leaders the most commonly linked to fighters on the ground."
- Another group, led by former secretary-general of the FLEC-FAC Joel Batila, broke away from FLEC-FAC eight months earlier. He proclaimed himself "the prime minister of the Republic of Kabinda." (ibid. 57-58)

Information to corroborate the details provided by Good Governance Africa could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Relations with the authorities

Human Rights Watch reports that "an intermittent conflict with a separatist movement has persisted in the enclave of Cabinda since 1975" and adds that "the authorities continued using the conflict to justify restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly and association" (Jan. 2012, 3). Amnesty International also states that "in a few cases, those suspected of membership of FLEC have been held without charge for long periods, or subjected to unfair trials in contravention of national and international human rights law." (Apr. 2012, 11). However, the 2011 and 2012 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, published by the U.S. Department of State, indicate that, unlike in previous years, no cases of Cabinda residents being detained on suspicion of FLEC-related activities or collaboration with the group were reported in 2011 or 2012 (US 24 May 2012, 10; *ibid.* 19 Apr. 2013, 10). Information to corroborate the details provided by *Country Reports* could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Sources report that the government relaunched a counter-insurgency campaign in Cabinda in 2011 (Freedom House 2013; Human Rights Watch Jan. 2012, 3). According to Freedom House, the government reported that it had launched counter attacks against rebel forces, noting that they were led primarily by FLEC-FAC (2013). *Country Reports 2011* also reports that the Angolan Armed Forces led a campaign against FLEC in 2011 that resulted in a few deaths (US 24 May 2012, 2). According to *Country Reports 2011*, the armed forces responded to at least one FLEC attack targeting civilians (*ibid.*). Freedom House reports that the counter-insurgency campaign was still under way at the end of 2012 (2013). Information indicating whether the campaign continued beyond the end of 2012 could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Good Governance Africa states that Mr. Tiago has publicly called for negotiations with the government in recent years (Dec. 2013, 56). Similarly, Freedom House reports that rebel forces in Cabinda asked to hold negotiations with the government in August 2012, but that there was no development in this regard at the end of 2012 (2013).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Websites include: Agência Angola Press; AllAfrica; Angola news; BBC; Cabinda Nation; Cabindalite; ecoi.net; Factiva; Flec Noticias; Global Terrorism Database; Global Security.org; Ireland – Refugee Documentation Centre; The Jamestown Foundation; *Jeune Afrique*; National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism; United Nations – Refworld; Portal Oficial do Governo da República de Angola; United Kingdom – Home Office; Small Arms Survey; Stratfor; *Tribune de Genève*.

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