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AGO41675.E

05 August 2003

Angola: Whether clergymen are automatically exempted from military service; if not, whether a pastor can seek an exemption and under what conditions

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

According to the Consular Section of the Embassy of the Republic of Angola, in Ottawa, "[t]here is no evidence or report that a clergyman has served in the military in Angola" (4 July 2003).

Following consultations with their office in Angola, the Legal Officer of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in Ottawa, stated in correspondence with the Research Directorate that the Catholic Church and the military seem to have an informal arrangement for exemptions from military service to be made for the clergy, but that UNHCR is not aware of any written agreement to this effect (29 July 2003).

The Legal Officer also provided the following information regarding exemptions that would allow an individual to avoid performing military service in Angola:

Military service is not compulsory for women except under special proclamation. The Law governing military service (no. 1/93 of 26 March 1993) provides for university students in good standing and all teachers and professors to be exempted from military service. The law also allows the Government to provide exemptions for additional professions or groups as needed (UN 29 July 2003).

Sources consulted by the United Kingdom's Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND), including Radio Nacional de Angola indicated that, "[i]n practice, compulsory service is only applied during times of crisis or shortage" (UK 20 April 2003, para. 5.24). However, students enrolled in school full-time, teachers and technicians and specialists, who are identified annually by the Council of Ministers, are exempt from conscription (ibid.). To make the identification of those permitted to defer military service official, the government standardized a yellow certificate for deferment on educational grounds and a white certificate for health reasons in June 1999 (ibid.). The certificates are only valid for between six and twelve months and require the signature of the Chief of the Personnel Division of the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) General Staff (ibid.). Under military criminal law, "fraudulent use or endorsement of these certificates constitutes a crime" (ibid.).

The Consular Section of the Embassy of the Republic of Angola, in Ottawa, also stated that, regarding requests for exemption from military service, each case is reviewed by a selection committee on a case-by-case basis (4 July 2003).

For additional information on military service in Angola, including those who qualify for exemption, please consult AGO39461.E of 9 July 2002, AGO39448.E of 9 July 2002 and AGO41322.E of 5 March 2003.

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 to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Angola. 4 July 2003. Embassy of the Republic of Angola, Ottawa. Correspondence from Consular Section.

United Kingdom (UK). April 2003. Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office. "Angola Assessment." <<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/default.asp?PageId=3319>> [Accessed 28 July 2003]

United Nations. 29 July 2003. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Representation in Canada. Ottawa. Correspondence from Legal Officer.

Additional Sources Consulted

IRB Databases

The Defense, Military, Naval and Air Attaché of the Embassy of the Republic of Angola was unable to provide information on the above-mentioned topic within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sites, including:

AllAfrica.com

Amnesty International

Angola Press Agency

Angolan Anti-Militarism Initiative for Human Rights

BBC News Africa

Embassy of Angola Website: UK, Canada, France

Global IDP

Human Rights Resource Directory

Integrated Regional Information Networks

International Alert

Relief Web

Republic of Angola Website

UK Home Office, Immigration and Nationality Directorate, *Country Assessment: Angola*.

War Resisters' International (WRI)

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