

ANGOLA: The world's forgotten war



IN SEPTEMBER 1992, millions of Angolans went to their first multi-party elections, which should have ushered in a new era of peace and democracy.

The MPLA decisively won the elections, achieving a clear majority and forming a new government.

But the losing party, Jonas Savimbi's Unita, rejected its role of leading opposition in the new National Assembly and relaunched a vicious war in an attempt to overturn the election results.

ALTHOUGH hope remains that eventually Unita will be compelled to abandon its war, the result of its aggression has already been the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives, the displacement of up to three million refugees, the besieging of major cities – causing starvation and disease. Much of the population is dependent on UN food aid flights for mere survival. The economy and infrastructure have been devastated. Hopes of progress, reconstruction and development have been dashed.

The response of the international community to this tragedy has been 'too little too late'. Although as early as May 1993, the UN described Angola's war as the world's worst, the situation has received far less attention than it needs. The UN has often appeared far too slow in condemning Unita's aggression and slower still in taking steps to halt it. It was a full year before the UN imposed sanctions, banning shipment of arms and fuel to Unita. Even those limited actions are not being properly monitored or enforced and Unita continues to obtain the means to wage war.

Unless a definitive agreement is reached between Unita and the government of Angola and Unita halts its attacks and disbands its army, the toughest possible package of measures must be put in place against Unita:

- Existing sanctions on arms and fuel supplies to Unita must be fully enforced with the use of aerial and satellite detection if necessary;
- further sanctions should be applied against Unita trade, travel, finance, 'representative offices' and other sources of material and moral support .

At the same time much more support and assistance needs to be provided to the legitimate Angolan government, coping with an armed insurgency and with the needs of an impoverished people, millions of refugees, malnutrition and disease.

- medical, food and reconstruction aid to the Angolan government and its agencies should be stepped up;
- other assistance requested by the Angolan government should be provided.

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