



Angola – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 10 May 2011

Is FLEC Renovada an armed faction of FLEC or a separate armed organisation (a splinter group)?

A 2009 report from *Human Rights Watch* about human rights abuses in Angola states:

“In 2006, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the Angolan government and António Bento Bembe, the former leader of the FLEC Renovada wing and president of the Cabindan Forum for Dialogue (FCD), sought to formally end the armed conflict. The FCD had been established in 2004 as a joint commission including representatives of the two main FLEC factions—FLEC Renovada and FLEC-FAC—as well as members of civil society and the churches, to facilitate peace negotiations with the government. The MOU included an amnesty, a demobilization and reintegration plan for former FLEC combatants, and the allocation of a number of government posts to a range of former FLEC officials.” (Human Rights Watch (22 June 2009) *Angola: "They Put Me in the Hole"*)

A 2010 profile of armed groups in Cabinda from *Al Jazeera* states:

“The original FLEC was reformed in the 1990s, and two factions were created; FLEC-Renovada (Renewed Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda) and FLEC-Armed Forces of Cabinda (FLEC-FAC).

Between May and August 1997, FLEC fighters mounted at least 15 attacks on military targets in Cabinda, *Globalsecurity.org*, said.

Heavy fighting was reported in Tandu-Zinze, Buko-Zawu and Belize, in the north of the province.

The situation then quietened until 1999, when FLEC started to target foreigners, kidnapping a number of construction and oil workers, in an attempt to gain international attention for its independence fight.

Cabinda is important to the Angolan economy, with oilfields off its coast estimated to account for about 60 per cent of the country's output. However, many Cabindans complain that the oil wealth fails to find its way back to the people.

In October 2002, the Angolan military claimed it had destroyed Kungo-Shonzo, FLEC-FAC's main base, and just months later it declared that it had also captured the base of FLEC-Renovada.

The following year, General Armando da Cruz Neto, the Angolan military chief of staff, said: "We are in a position to state that there have been significant changes in Cabinda's military situation as a result of operations carried out by our armed forces. "FLEC-Renovada has ceased to operate since late 2002."” (*AlJazeera* (9 Jan 2010) *Profile: Cabinda separatists*)

An article on Cabinda from *Global Security* states:

“In March 2001 FLEC-Renovada, an offshoot of the original FLEC group that is not usually violent, kidnaped five Portuguese employees of a construction company; they were released after 3 months. In May 2000, members of FLEC-FAC kidnaped three foreign and one local employee of a Portuguese company in Cabinda; by July FLEC-FAC had released one of the kidnaped persons for medical reasons. In July it released the remaining abductees [...]

[...] By the end of February 2003, General Armando da Cruz Neto, the FAA chief of staff, confidently announced: "We are in a position to state that there have been significant changes in Cabinda's military situation as a result of operations carried out by our armed forces. FLEC-Renovada has ceased to operate since late 2002. We could say that the operation launched to restore peace in Cabinda has reached a positive phase. The next phase entails the development of border control mechanisms, so as to prevent FLEC forces from regrouping and returning." (Globalsecurity.org (9 January 2010) *Military>Cabinda*)

A 2007 query response from the *Immigration and refugee Board of Canada*

“As reported by Afrol News, a September 2004 meeting in Helviort, Netherlands, that was attended by Cabinda's rebel and civil society groups "succeeded in unifying Cabinda's fragmented pro-independence movement" (Afrol News 7 Sept. 2004). At the meeting, the two FLEC splinter groups, the FLEC-FAC led by N'Zita Henriques Tiago and FLEC-Renovada led by Antonio Bento Bembe, agreed to merge their groups and return to their original shared name, FLEC (ibid.). The Political Handbook of the World: 2007 indicates that N'Zita Tiago acted as leader of the newly consolidated FLEC, while Antonio Bento Bembe became FLEC's secretary general (Political Handbook 2006, 42).” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (22 March 2007) *Angola: Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda - Armed Forces of Cabinda (FLEC-FAC), including human rights abuses committed by and against this organization (2006 - January 2007)*)

A 2004 report on Cabinda from the *Human Rights Watch* states:

“Its effectiveness was hindered by various factional splits, notably the division in 1984 between FLEC-Renovada (FLEC-R) and FLEC-FAC (Armed Forces of Cabinda) caused by personal rather than political or ideological differences.” (Human Rights Watch (23 December 2004) *Angola: "Angola: Between War and Peace in Cabinda"*)

The report goes on to say

“Government representatives met FLEC-FAC officials in France in January 2003 and with FLEC-R in Gabon later in the same year. These overtures failed to convince the separatists of the government's sincerity, coming as they did in the midst of increased FAA activity in Cabinda.¹⁷ The FLEC factions were also reluctant to lay down their arms until they had a clearer assurance of what degree of autonomy the government would be prepared to contemplate. In August 2003, the provincial governor Aníbal Rocha stated that efforts were being made for dialogue on Cabinda's future to start “as soon as possible,” and most of these efforts have been behind the scenes with little public evidence of further talks more than a year later.¹⁸ In September 2004, the leaders of FLEC-FAC and FLEC-R announced that their two factions were to merge and agreed to set up a committee “responsible for dialogue,”

which would include representation from “the liberation movements, churches, and civil society. (ibid)

A 2003 report on Angola from the *United Kingdom Home Office* states:

“6.23 FLEC (Frente para a Libertacao do Enclave de Cabinda) was formed in 1963 as a nationalist movement seeking separate independence for Cabinda, a 2,807 sq mile (7,300 sq km) oil-rich enclave on the Atlantic coast sandwiched between the DRC and the Congo Republic. Since its formation FLEC has split into a number of factions HUsee Annex BUH; some of these factions have engaged in rebel activity in their attempt to achieve their aim of an independent Cabinda. The main FLEC factions, Angola April 2003 FLEC-Renovada (FLEC-R) and FLEC-Forças Armadas Cabindes as (FLEC-FAC) are deeply divided; encouraging competition and conflict that Luanda often exploits. The rebel groups reportedly retain wide popular support from the Cabindan locals. [1a][5][16i]” (United Kingdom Home Office (April 2003) *Angola: "Country Assessment - April 2003"*)

References

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre 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 read in full all documents referred to.

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