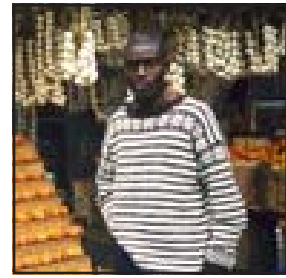


WHAT KIND OF PEACE IS BEING CREATED?

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My name is Alcido Nunda. I am speaking today as a young person from Angola and as a young person committed to the development of peace in Angola. I am co-coordinator of MOJUP - Youth Movement for Peace. We are working in two provinces: Huambo and Huila. So my remarks are based on my personal and volunteer work experiences.

My country is known for its long conflict, a bitter conflict that took place from 1975 until 2002, one that has caused much suffering and poverty for the Angolan people. But we are also known as a rich country, one with incredible resources - diamonds, oil and many minerals. Unfortunately, until now, the benefits from these resources are only reaching a small part of the population. But we are hoping now that we have peace, that this will change.

To understand Angola's present situation it is important to know something of our past. Angola was a Portuguese colony for five hundred years. During this harsh time the Portuguese controlled all aspects of Angolan life and treated the local population with no respect.

When the Portuguese colonial rule ended in 1974, we were rejoicing and hoping that this would be a true liberation for the Angolan people. Three parties were formed and elections were held. However, things soon broke down.

Two opposing parties were created - UNITA and the MPLA. Fighting between these two groups continued on and off for 27 years. And, once again, the internal situation of Angola was subject to pressures and intervention from outside forces as different countries provided support for the MPLA or UNITA.

Our country was a battleground for opposing ideologies and economic interests.

During the civil war the MPLA was mostly in the cities and UNITA in the forest. Both sides used young people - as messengers, porters and soldiers. Many youth, particularly boys, were forced to serve, sometimes for one side and then another. We grew up in a world where we were used but had little power or voice - to speak for peace was seen as a political act.

But now we are living in the post-conflict time. I have to ask myself - is this peace? What kind of peace are we making here in Angola? For me sometimes it seems to be a strange form of peace. It often seems that the habit of fighting, of conflict amongst people has not been forgotten.

1. After years of conflict and suspicion, people find it hard to trust each other.

You see many examples of intolerance in the streets. In all cities in the country, mostly in Luanda and Benguela there are many problems with security, assaults in the schools and sometimes gunfire. There is a growing problem with bandits in Luanda. While the government has called for people to give up their weapons, they are unwilling to do this. Many homes have two or more guns.

2. Government and other organizations have been trying to do something about these situations. But sometimes they seem give a good talk more than do real action. We know that the needs are enormous and that they cannot perform miracles. However many people are suffering, many children are continuing to die of hunger. There are still many children in the streets who have no assistance.

When we lived with war, people thought that peace would bring an end to their suffering. They prayed for this. But while peace is said to be here, the suffering is still continuing. We fear that people will become impatient and have seen examples of this in the centres for displaced people.

This is combined with another problem. The years of colonial rule and war have meant that people have been forced to be passive. They have this habit. So now we can see that many people expect the government to solve their problems for housing or food. In some quarters we see resentment growing, people do not want to wait anymore for a better life.

3. We do not see a good harmony amongst the people. We see a weak identity because until now most of the people think that the OVIMBUNDO are all of them and SAVIMBI's men and are to blame for all the misfortune to the Angolan people.

4. There is little or no freedom outside of Luanda. There continues to be little freedom of speech, particularly outside the capital city. People are not able to say what they think - or fear to do so. They cannot say anything critical of the government's actions.

5. There are many officials speaking about peace and coming up with ideas for how to bring this about. But these initiatives rarely come through consultations with the base. These officials are not close to the base, so they do not know the real needs of the people.

6. Finally, we can also see that people do not always trust that this is a lasting peace. Peace has come to Angola and broken down. People fear that this will happen again. So, for example, people want to keep their guns, they don't want to give them up, because they fear they may need them for protection in the future.

So what do we, as MOJUP, Youth Movement for Peace, think should happen in order to have a truly strong peace?

1. There must be a friendly weather so that young people from both sides - UNITA and MPLA - feel that they are equal, that they are both Angolan citizens. In our work we have noticed that youth who were with UNITA feel very defensive and that others look down on them and treat them with suspicion.

2. Young people need to have the opportunity to analyze and understand the origins of our conflict. We need an open dialogue where many opinions and points of view can be heard. This has been missing until now. Through this we can arrive at a mutual understanding of the truth, of our history. This is an important part of reconciliation in

Angola where so many people have suffered but have not had the chance to speak about their experiences and learn about those of others.

3. Because so many people have been excluded during the war, Angola must work to create a very inclusive process, one that involves all people. In our country people have felt so much despair because of the war - we need to fill them with an enthusiasm for the future. We need to create a culture of belonging, where everyone can contribute and share in a common vision. We need to make special efforts to ensure that females are encouraged and participate. We need to end the idea of winners and losers.



4. We need to provide education to those who missed this because of the war. Many young people do not know how to write their name.

5. We need to extend our idea of democracy. Because of the nature of Angola's war young people have little confidence in the electoral process. We need to do public education on this as well as insisting that the government is more open and transparent in its dealings.

6. As part of that we need to insist on good codes of conduct for any businesses coming into Angola so the benefits of our resources really reach the people.

We know that these are difficult measures to put into practise. But we also know that they are the building blocks for a strong and lasting peace.

In closing, I want to say that when I was given this topic - what kind of peace is being developed - it made me think a lot about Angola and how we are developing. I think the correct answer is to say that nothing is definite yet; no clear direction has been set. Yes, there are problems, but there are also many people dedicated to peace and to making Angola a country of hope and prosperity.

I believe this is possible.