

Three claimed to
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governments of the



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Three nationalist movements were involved in the struggle for independence. The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola-MPLA) was formed in December 1956 with the aim of ending colonial rule and building a new and unified society. It was led by Agostinho Neto. The National Front of Angolan Liberation (Frente Nacional de Libertacao de Angola-FNLA), essentially a tribalist movement, was formed in 1962, operating in the north of the country and led by Holden Roberto. The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (Uniao Nacional Para an Independence Total de Angola-UNITA) was formed in 1966 under Dr. Jonas Savimbi.

Operating mainly in eastern Angola. The MPLA on 11 Nov. 1975 proclaimed the People's Republic of Angola, with Neto as president and the other two nationalist movements also claimed to have established governments of the new State. On 24 Nov. 1975 the Nigerian Government recognised the MPLA government and prompted other States to follow suit. As 350, 000 Portuguese settlers left Angola, the Cuban intervention proved decisive and on 25 March 1976 South Africa also announced that its troops would be withdrawn from southern Angola. A socialist regime was established in the new republic and in Dec.

1977 the MPLA was restructured as a Marxist-Leninist party, with the State becoming an instrument of the party. President Neto died on 19th Sept. 1979, and was succeeded by another MPLA veteran, Jose Eduardo dos Santos.

Elections to the National People's Assembly, consisting of 289 deputies, were held in 1980 and 1986, but political power remained firmly in the control of the 90-member central committee and the 15-member political bureau of the MPLA. Following 16 years of civil war, peace had come to Angola with the signing of a treaty between President Dos Santos and his MPLA government, and Jonas Savimbi's UNITA in May 1991. Presidential and parliamentary elections planned for October 1992 were, however, threatened by clashes in August between the government and the UNITA supporters in the northern city of Malange. UNITA accused the government of police intimidation, of operating a purposely complex electoral process and protested against a persistent media bias in favour of President Dos Santos. In Oct.

92, millions of Angolans cast their vote, thrilled by the prospects of peace. The first free elections, held under UN auspices, were designed to end the war between the government of President Jose Fduardo dos Santos, once backed by the Soviet Union and now recognized by the US and Jonas Savimbi, the leader of the UNITA rebel movement. Savimbi refused to accept the government's 129-to-91-seat election victory and plunged Angola back into ferocious conflict that has so far claimed an additional 100, 000 lives. Savimbi died in Feb. 2001, and the travails ended for the Angolans, who had suffered enormously for over 25 years. Angola has to contend with the problem of millions of landmines spread all over the country. Late Princess Diana visited Angola and was so moved by the tragedy that she campaigned vigorously against the landmines.

These have claimed thousands of lives in Angola. Cambodia. Afghanistan and other civil war torn regions. Angola moved closer to normalcy in Nov. 2004, when over 2000 UNITA militants joined MPLA.