

Angola Suspends Pentecostal Church After Stampede

Angola's government has suspended a **Pentecostal church** from conducting any activities for 60 days after a New Year's Eve stampede during an overcrowded religious vigil killed 16 people, the presidency said in a statement.

The incident took place at the Cidadela Desportiva stadium in the capital Luanda, where the Universal Church of the **Kingdom of God** (IURD) organized a Pentecostal Christian vigil.

The death toll included three small children. Another 120 people were injured.

The presidency said in a statement issued late on Saturday that an inquiry commission had concluded that IURD had attracted 150,000 people to a venue with capacity for 30,000.

It added that the church had caused the overcrowding by marketing the event as "The Day of End—come to end all your problems in life: illness, misery, unemployment...".

The inquiry commission said it would pass its findings to the public prosecutors office to investigate criminal and civil responsibility.

It also suspended six other **evangelical churches** for the same period, adding that they conducted activities similar to those of IURD.

Catholicism is the main religion in Angola, but evangelical churches have in the last decade flourished in the country and attracted large followings.

IURD was created in 1977 in Brazil, where it has over 8 million followers, according to its website. IURD says it is active in most countries of the world.

Reporting by Shrikesh Laxmidas; editing by Andrew Roche

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