

Megachurch Pastor Goes on Trial for Murdering 9 Cops

The leader of a fringe Christian sect in Angola went on trial with 10 of his followers on Monday charged with the murder of nine police officers and attempted murder in central Huambo province last year.

Police say the officers were shot dead during raids which ended with the capture of preacher Jose Kalupeteka, leader of a millenarian sect called "The Light of the World," and his followers last April.

The raids were launched as a part of a drive against fringe Christian church groups now illegal under new rules that require denominations to have 100,000 registered members spread across at least a third of Angola's 18 provinces.

Kalupeteka's church has an estimated 3,000 members.

Angolan opposition party UNITA has said that more than 1,000 civilians were killed when police clashed with members of Kalupeteka's church, though police have said only 13 sect members died.

Defense lawyer David Mendes asked the court for a review of the trial process, arguing his clients had been tortured during detention. The trial will continue on Tuesday. {eoa}

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