

SA intervention needed to end impasse in Mozambique

From David Rabkin
in Maputo.

The search for an end to the protracted civil conflict between the Prelimo Government and the Mozambique National Resistance Movement seems to have come to a temporary halt. A further intervention by South Africa may be needed to end the impasse.

According to diplomatic sources, President Machel remains firmly opposed to MNR demands for a place in the Government and restoration of property and posts held before Mozambique's independence in 1975. He is refusing to accept responsibility for MNR members, whether leaders or rank and file, who are outside Mozambique.

Mozambican hopes that Pretoria would "deliver" the MNR seem to have been disappointed. Security in key areas of the country has deteriorated. At the same time, President Machel is said to have accepted South African denials that it has violated the Nkomati non-aggression accord.

South Africa is anxious to see the security situation in

southern Mozambique improve so that a much-needed export drive can be routed through the Maputo docks.

President Machel's trust in South African places the Mozambican leadership in a difficult position. Is not the South Africans, then who is behind the continued MNR offensive? It is believed that charges against "elements" in Portugal and even in the Portuguese Cabinet will have been revived over the weekend.

There is not much reason for the MNR to make concessions. Although there has been a significant improvement in security in Sofala province with the opening of the Beira-Mozatiza railway line, conditions in the North and South have worsened.

In the Quelimane district of Zambezia province there is an acute shortage of firewood and food. The war in Niassa province is also said to have intensified.

In the south, Mozambican troops have launched offensives in the Magde district of Maputo province and along the Mozambique-Swaziland border. According to a

Mozambican frontier official, the government forces have identified an MNR base on the Swazi side of the border.

The Mozambican Chief of Staff, General Sebastiao Mabo'e, has visited the area and the Mozambicans have asked the Swazi Government to let them eliminate the base.

The MNR have been terrorising villagers along the Swazi border, with the apparent intention of causing an exodus of refugees. More than 500 Mozambicans have crossed the boundary in the last week and the movement seems to be continuing. Officials of the UN High Commission for Refugees in Maputo and Mbabane believe that there was a deliberate attempt to stampede the villagers.

The rebels apparently inflicted bayonet wounds on scores of men and women, while the refugees themselves tell tales of babies killed by being smashed against rocks.

Mr Emmanuel Owusu, UNHCR representative in Swaziland, said he would visit the refugees to ask if they wanted to remain in Swaziland or return to Mozambique.