

NEW CAMP PLANNED FOR MNR VICTIMS

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THE Government, together with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, plans to open an extra camp for displaced Mozambicans in Chiredzi to accommodate 15 000 people who are scattered in the south-eastern part of Zimbabwe, the Minister of Labour, Manpower Planning and Social Welfare, Dr Frederick Shava, said in Harare yesterday.

Opening the East and Southern African training course on refugee law, Cde Shava said by the end of last month, the number of displaced Mozambicans accommodated in four camps in Zimbabwe stood at 40 000.

In 1980 after independence, Zimbabwe opened its doors to refugees from South Africa and other states. The trend still continues with a large influx of displaced persons coming into Zimbabwe from Mozambique.

"When Mozambicans started coming here, we argued with various agencies funding refugee programmes that Moz-

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ambicans were not refugees as far as Zimbabwe was concerned because they were not running from persecution by their own state. Both Mozambicans and the state were being persecuted by South African-backed bandits."

The minister said there was need to support displaced persons in the same manner as refugees — without reservation. Twenty-five years ago, 1.2 million people received international assistance as refugees, in the East and Southern Africa.

Presently, there are more than 10 million refugees and displaced persons in the region. "Of these, more than five million are of African origin,

most of whom are concentrated in the East and Southern African region."

Zimbabwe's international obligation to humanity, Cde Shava said, did not begin from a particular legal framework but from a moral obligation and "our desire to reciprocate the hospitality once offered to us".

Zimbabwe also received persons coming from South Africa who were running away from persecution at the hands of the apartheid regime.

"When they come here we are under obligation to provide them with necessary facilities awarded to them in the international community by countries recognising the refugee situation," Cde Shava said.