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~~100,000 MOZAMBICANS KILLED BY RENAMO, SOURCE SAYS (990)~~  
(Article on 4/19 briefing)

By Charles W. Corey USIA Staff Writer

WASHINGTON -- At least 100,000 civilians have been killed by Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) guerrillas during the past two years, and countless others have been subjected to an "extremely high" level of violence, says a U.S. State Department source.

There are nearly a million Mozambican refugees in neighboring countries as the result of the continuing violence.

In comments to reporters April 19, the source said his figures are the result of recent interviews with 200 Mozambican refugees who were eyewitnesses and/or victims of RENAMO violence.

The source said during a recent trip to southern Africa he also received "hundreds of reports of systematic patterns of forced portering, forced marches, looting, rape, burning and destruction of villages, severe beatings, abductions and mutilations by RENAMO."

The source charged that RENAMO violence is "systematic and coordinated (and) not spontaneous and undisciplined."

Because of such conditions, he added, the number of Mozambican refugees has swelled in the past year by 300 percent to 872,000, spread among Mozambique's neighbors. That includes Malawi (450,000), Zimbabwe (75,000), Zambia (30,000), South Africa (225,000), Tanzania (72,000), and Swaziland (20,000).

If present conditions continue, he noted, the number of refugees will reach one million by the year's end, with 600,000 of them going to Malawi. There are also more than 1.5 million refugees displaced inside Mozambique, he added. Mozambique's population is estimated to be about 14 million.

The United States is providing more than four million dollars for refugee assistance in Malawi, more than 30 million dollars to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and 14 million dollars to the International Committee of the Red Cross to be used for African refugees. The U.S. Agency for International Development is providing 15,000 metric tons of food for Mozambican refugees in Malawi.

The relationship between RENAMO and civilians inside parts of Mozambique "revolves exclusively around a high degree of extraction of labor and food," the source said.

RENAMO, he noted, "provides virtually no services, no protection, has no political program and makes no effort to explain the purpose of its effort. The only reciprocity which the civilian population appears to hope for or to expect from RENAMO is the possibility of remaining alive."

The source said civilian complaints against Mozambican government armed forces tended to be "isolated incidents that took place in remote areas." Independent observers, quoted by the source, said they have perceived a "sustained trend towards improvement in FRELIMO human rights practices."

Those observers also rejected, according to the source, the concept that the high level of violence in Mozambique can be attributed to "freelance bandits not associated with RENAMO or FRELIMO."

The source said RENAMO has divided much of Mozambique into three distinct areas: for tax; control; and destruction.

Tax areas, according to the source, are sectors where RENAMO collects food as a tax from independent farmers.

"In the context of those visits, there are reports of rape, (and) there are reports of occasional sporadic murder of people who are deemed to be collaborators with FRELIMO," he noted.

Conversations with refugees from tax areas also reveal, the source said, that there is "virtually no political content to the (RENAMO) program, no effort to explain why they are collecting food, (no effort) to win the loyalty or even the neutrality" of the people.

In control areas, where RENAMO has "prevalent control of a certain geographic region," the source said refugees who escaped told of forced work for long hours in RENAMO fields, "with no share of the food which they participate in producing, no remuneration; no services, no protection. And if they slow down, if they rest, if they resist working, they are severely beaten."

Others, he noted, have been used in "forced marches" to carry food, ammunition and supplies from one area of Mozambique to another.

Most of those escapees, according to the source, "eyewitnessed cases in which porters who couldn't continue -- and particularly the older people who were used as porters -- were beaten to death or executed."

Refugees also reported, according to the source, that RENAMO police units patrol control areas and often catch civilians and execute them before their fellow villagers and family members.

"Tens or hundreds of thousands of people" are living under these violent conditions, the source added.

In addition to a high level of violence, the source said, Mozambicans are also living under drought conditions which have further reduced food levels and caused starvation conditions.

Because of such conditions, he said, those refugees lucky enough to escape are arriving in Malawi, looking "extremely starved and wasted and naked."

"Destruction areas" have been designated by RENAMO in north, south and central portions of the country, according to the source.

Such areas, he said, often comprise villages of more than 40 families or refugees who had left Mozambique and then returned.

Attacks on such areas are "well prepared in advance," he said.

RENAMO forces will often proceed directly to the homes of government representatives, "take them and in some cases their wives, their children, their in-laws, their parents, and execute them in front of their fellow villagers."

The action is "intended to be a demonstration" for those who might be sympathetic to FRELIMO, he added.

The source recalled one particular example of RENAMO violence, where a village chairman was "axed in the head" and his "entire family put back in the house and burned alive, while the local villagers were forced to watch."

RENAMO soldiers have also surrounded villages and "fired indiscriminately into its homes as people tried to escape."

Looking to the future, the source speculated that "if the level of murder continues as it is today, (it is) certain tens of thousands of people are going to continue dying in the same manner."

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