

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."