

Bandits have no political programme — US report

Bloodthirsty MINR
butcher 100 000

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AT LEAST 100 000 Mozambican civilians have been murdered in the past two years by MNR bandits and countless others have been subjected to an "extremely high" level of violence, according to a report prepared for the United States state department.

The report, prepared by an expert who spent three months in Southern Africa talking to hundreds of people, notes that the MNR is just a bandit organisation with no political programme.

In a Washington briefing on Tuesday for the United States Information Service, the expert, described by the Usis report as a US state department source, said the relationship between the MNR and civilians inside parts of Mozambique "revolves exclusively around a high degree of extraction of labour and food".

The MNR provided "virtually no services, no protection, has no political programme 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".

SYSTEMATIC

During his trip to Southern Africa the Usis source said he had 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". MNR violence was "systematic and co-ordinated, not spontaneous undisciplined".

Usis reports their source as saying that the MNR has divided much of Mozambique into three distinct areas: for tax; for control; and for destruction.

Tax areas were sectors where the MNR collected food as a tax from independent farmers. "In the context of those visits, there are murder of people who are deemed to be collaborators with Frelimo."

Conversations with those who had fled the tax areas also revealed, the source said, that there was "virtually no political content to the (MNR) programme, 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

the MNR had "prevalent control of a certain geographic region", those who escaped told of forced work with long hours in MNR 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 had been used in forced marches, he said, to carry food, ammunition and supplies from one area of Mozambique to another.

EXECUTED

Most of those who couldn't continue — and particularly the older people who were used as porters — were beaten to death or executed".

The escapees also reported that MNR units patrol

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"control" areas and often catch civilians and execute them before their fellow villagers and family members.

"Tens of hundreds of thousands of people" were living under these violent conditions. In addition to the high level of violence, Mozambicans were also facing drought which had reduced food levels and caused starvation conditions.

Because of such conditions those lucky enough to escape were arriving in Malawi looking "extremely starved and wasted and naked".

The third type of area, "destruction" areas, had been designated by the MNR in the north, south and central parts of the country and such areas were often villages of more than 40 fam-

ilies or displaced people who had left Mozambique and later returned.

Attacks on such areas were "well-prepared in advance", said the source. MNR forces would often proceed directly to homes of government representatives and "take them — and in some cases their wives, their children, their in-laws, their parents — and execute them in front of their fellow villagers".

Such action was "intended to be a demonstration" for those who might be sympathetic to Frelimo.

BURNED ALIVE

One example given of MNR violence was a village chairman "axed in the head" with his "entire family put back in the house and burned alive while the local

villagers were forced to watch".

MNR bandits had also surrounded villages and "fired indiscriminately into homes as people tried to escape". Said the source: "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."

The Frelimo government's human rights record had improved, said the Usis source. Civilian complaints against Mozambican government armed forces tended to be "isolated incidents that took place in remote areas". Independent observers said they had perceived a "sustained trend towards improvement in Frelimo human rights practices".

These same observers rejected the concept that the

high level of violence in Mozambique could be attributed to "freelance bandits not associated with Renamo or Frelimo".

SANCTUARY

Because of the conditions created by the MNR, the number of Mozambicans seeking sanctuary in neighbouring countries had swelled over the past year by 300 percent to 872 000. There were 450 000 in Malawi, 75 000 in Zimbabwe, 30 000 in Zambia, 225 000 in South Africa, 72 000 in Tanzania and 20 000 in Swaziland.

If present conditions continued the number outside Mozambique would reach a million by the end of the year. There were also more than 1,5 million people displaced inside Mozambique. The population of Mozam-

bique was estimated at about 14 million.

To help these people the US had given more than US\$4 million for assistance in Malawi, more than US\$30 million to the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and \$14 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross to be used for African refugees. The US Agency for International Development was providing 15 000 tonnes of food for Mozambicans in Malawi.

The expert who did the report for the US state department was no fly-by-nighter, according to Herald sources. He spent three months in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Zambia, Swaziland and Tanzania talking to more than 200 displaced Mozambicans and many other sources both official and

unofficial, or what he called independent.

The report is the most extensive prepared by any agency on Mozambique and besides its detail its great importance also rests on the fact that it is a US report meant for Americans.