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MOZAMBICANS FLED REBELS, U.S. SAYS

Many Thousands of Civilians
Were Brutalized or Killed,
Refugee Study Alleges

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 20 — The State Department issued a report today asserting that hundreds of thousands of civilians fled from Mozambique in the last two years after being subjected to brutality and violence by rebels trying to overthrow the Marxist Government.

The report, based on interviews with nearly 200 refugees in Mozambique and four adjacent countries, estimated that "100,000 civilians may have been murdered" by members of the insurgent group, the Mozambican National Resistance, which goes by the name Renamo.

Some were shot to death and some were killed by knife, ax or bayonet, while others were burned, beaten, asphyxiated, starved or drowned, the report said. The author of the report, Robert Gersony, a consultant to the State Department who has investigated such problems around the world, did not observe the abuses he described. But he said he "would assign a high level of credibility to the refugee accounts" because they were detailed, spontaneous and consistent. The refugees were interviewed at 42 locations in Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and South Africa without coaching by officials of any government, he said.

Dispute on South African Role

The State Department says the rebels have received assistance from military officials in South Africa. The Government of South Africa acknowledges that it once provided such assistance, but denies that it has done so since 1984. Conservatives in the United States, including Senator Jesse Helms, Republican of North Carolina, have generally supported the insurgents as "freedom fighters" and have unsuccessfully urged the Reagan Administration to enter into a dialogue with them.

Phyllis E. Oakley, a State Department spokeswoman, said today, "We are appalled by the findings" in the report, which she described as "horrifying." A State Department official praised the report as "a careful, meticulous piece of investigation," adding, "If anything, it understates the scope and magnitude of the problem."

The report says, for example, that "the number of deaths appeared to be underestimated" because most of the rebels interviewed "could not count accurately above the number 10."

Nancy M. Serpa, a spokeswoman for the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs, said, "We have complete confidence in the methodology and findings of this report and stand fully behind it."

Rebels Assail Findings

But Luis B. Serapião, the Washington representative of Renamo, said the report was "politically motivated" and "intellectually dishonest." He said that "traumatized refugees" could not be expected to speak candidly with an American researcher. The guerrillas have support from the people of Mozambique and could not operate without such support, he said.

The report, which describes "a mounting refugee crisis in southern Africa," was addressed to Jonathan Moore, the United States Coordinator for Refugee Affairs, and Chester A. Crocker, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs.

The State Department says there are 872,000 refugees from Mozambique in other countries of southern Africa. The number of such refugees has tripled in the last two years, Mr. Gersony's report said. The State Department said that 450,000 of the refugees were in Malawi and 225,000 were in South Africa.

As many as 1,000 refugees arrive each day in Malawi, many of them "in poor health, severely malnourished, without belongings and often naked," the report says.

Refugees Described Burdens

It says the insurgents seize food produced in areas of Mozambique under their control. This appears to explain "the wasted physical condition" of refugees arriving in other countries, the report said. The rebels severely punish people who try to escape from areas under their control, the study says, but many of the people are "too weak, too old or too sick" to try to escape.

Mr. Gersony quoted some of the refu-

gees as saying they had been forced to act as porters, carrying supplies or other cargo for the insurgents over long distances. Refugees said that porters were sometimes severely beaten if they stumbled, dropped their loads or refused to continue working.

The insurgent forces also demand that farmers supply them with food and sometimes require women to "submit to sexual demands, in effect to be raped," the report asserts. The rebels make little effort to explain their political goals, to administer the areas under their control or to provide protection or social services to local residents, the report said.

Refugees voiced comparatively few complaints about soldiers from the Government of Mozambique, the report said, and the complaints did not suggest "systematic problems of discipline or command."

A State Department official said the report "vindicates our reluctance to enter into any sort of relationship" with the insurgent group. But Thomas E. Boney Jr., an aide to Senator Helms, said the report was one-sided and did not prove that the insurgents had engaged in atrocities against civilians.

In response to an appeal from the United Nations, the United States recently pledged \$4.4 million to assist refugees from Mozambique in Malawi.