

A new report on Mozambique's killing fields

A new report on Mozambique has compared the effects of South Africa's support for the MNR with the holocausts of Nazi Germany and the killing fields of Kampuchea.

The report, *Mozambique: Caught in the Trap*, has been published by Christian Aid, the development arm of the British churches. "(Christian Aid) has witnessed how the bands of the MNR are prepared to commit atrocities against unarmed civilians on a scale not seen anywhere in modern history since the killing fields of Kampuchea or the Nazi Holocaust," the report says.

The report follows the recent US State Department report, which found the MNR guilty of "systematic and co-ordinated violence" against civilians, estimating that some 100,000 people had been murdered by the group.

But while the US report, compiled by Robert Gersony, avoided the question of external involvement, the Christian Aid report lays the blame squarely on the South African government. Pretoria has claimed to have ended its support for the MNR, but the report says that full-scale backing continues.

Written for the organisation by Derrick Knight, it refers to the conflict in Mozambique as "a clandestine war which is being deliberately planned and executed by the South African government as a matter of policy".

He estimates that over 500,000 people have been killed or died as a direct result of the war since 1980, and over \$6bn damage has been done to the economy.

The MNR are "supplied from outside the country but to some extent also live off the land by robbery and rustling. They operate not against the military, if they can help it, but against the unarmed population. It is a deliberate tactic which is calculated to sow terror and to wreck the rural economy," Knight says.

Support for the MNR has continued after South Africa and Mozambique signed the Nkomati non-aggression peace accord of 1984, in which Pretoria agreed to halt support for the rebels in return for a stop to Mozambican support for the ANC. When the pact was signed, South Africa sent as many fighters as possible

into Mozambique and began to use Malawi as a new rear base to open a new campaign in the northern provinces.

Since the signing of Nkomati "South Africa has hidden her continuing connection more carefully, but there has been further evidence that neither the supply lines, nor the means of control have altered since then," Knight says. He describes parachute drops, night-time deliveries of arms and submarines off the coast as evidence of continuing support.

Knight also argues that proof is also to be found in the pattern of MNR activity. The group does not seem to be trying to topple the government, but "instead it massacres and terrorises the very people who will vote in any future election," Knight says.

The MNR seizing power would not suit South Africa's interests, as a puppet administration in Maputo would be very expensive, "but chaos next door is both cheap and effective propaganda."

The report highlights the "dehumanisation process" to prepare the MNR fighters to commit atrocities. The methods, developed in Central America, involve "a regime which includes sadistic punishment, the mutilation of animals as a way of blunting human feelings, and most importantly, a form of indoctrination of the semi-literate recruits to make them believe that their victims are no longer human or children of god and can be butchered like animals."

These techniques are sometimes combined with the use of drugs and are used on children as young as 10 or 12. The report quotes a 12-year-old member of an MNR band who had been given drugs for a week before training.

After about three weeks' training, these children are "fully initiated by being forced to kill a relative or a neighbour. He is then terrified of the sin he has committed against his people and concludes that it is safer to remain a bandit," the report says. Children are also victims when they have to witness attacks; others are wounded or orphaned and large numbers abandoned by parents forced to flee. Estimates by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) say that 82,000 children died because of war and destabilisation in 1985, and a further 84,000 in 1986.

The report calls for urgent action, "including concerted diplomatic pressure on the South African government" to stop

the killings in Mozambique and to bring peace to the country and the entire Southern African region.

Refugee flood

Mozambican refugees have become a major burden for the country's neighbours. It is estimated that there are 100,000 in Zimbabwe, 80,000 in Tanzania, 30,000 in Swaziland (see below), 34,000 in Zambia and 500,000 in Malawi. Malawi, currently undergoing serious economic problems of its own, is expected to have 750,000 refugees by May 1989 if the current influx rate of 300 refugees a day continues.

The refugee camps in Malawi are highly vulnerable to MNR attacks and recruiting drives, as the Malawians are not providing protection.