

Technicians from various Mozambican companies and institutions are making preliminary studies for the reconstruction of Milange. The MNR left the district in ruins, and the technicians believe that very little can be repaired in the short or medium term.

The state electricity company is the only one which guarantees that, given "normal conditions", matters can be put right quickly. Electric power can be restored to the district within 45 days. Milange was supplied with power from Malawi, and the bandits sabotaged the power lines on the Mozambican side of the border.

Milange town is a desolate sight. It has been reduced virtually to rubble. Two types of destruction are visible. One is that caused by explosives, while the second results from systematic looting. The bandits sacked the town in a comprehensive and meticulous way.

The roofing has been removed from the houses that line the town's only tarmac street, and they have all been structurally damaged. Some of the walls have been blown up, but the doors and windowframes have all been ripped out, to be taken over the border and sold in Malawi. Lamposts and telephone posts have also been ripped open in order to make use of the cables inside.

Piping has all been carefully removed from the interior of the ruined houses, as has all zinc sheeting.

On the outskirts of the town, an area where the workers from the Milange tea-processing plants used to live has been laid waste. Here the houses, made from local materials, were all set alight.

Milange used to have three tea-processing factories, which produced 13,000 tonnes of tea annually. Of these, only one can be restored to working order in the medium term, according to Balbev Singh, an Indian specialist working for the Mozambican state tea company, Emocha.

There are just two buildings in the town that the MNR did not damage. One is a Roman Catholic church, and the other is a house where the priests lived. They celebrated mass every week in the ruined town.

"We don't know where these priests came from", one person who had returned from Milange after taking refuge in Malawi told AIM. This was one of the few local residents prepared to speak to journalists. Most of the 1,500 people currently in Milange town