

MNR Massacre at Maragra, Maputo province

Bandits of the South African backed MNR massacred 21 people in an attack on 9 August against the sugar centre of Maragra, about 75 kilometres north of Maputo. According to eye witnesses, the raid took place in the small hours of the morning when a force of bandits, estimated at about 300, attacked the Maragra workers' quarters. Many of them were young boys, whom survivors estimated were no more than 12 years old.

The bandits began by burning the huts of peasants living close to Maragra. They then burst into the workers' quarters, and according to a 26 year old Maragra technician, Antonio Meque, "they just went from door to door killing people...They just broke down the doors, shot at people and stole their belongings," Mr. Meque told AIM on 10 August from his Maputo hospital bed. He was one of 22 people wounded in the attack, and he was operated on to remove a bullet from his leg. It is feared that the death toll could rise as more bodies are discovered.

The same bandit group burnt down houses on 8 August near the town of Manhica, a few kilometres north of Maragra. Earlier in the day they had attacked civilian vehicles travelling on the main road north from Maputo, which passes through Manhica, and very close to Maragra.

Mr. Meque thought the bandits were taking revenge for a failed attack two weeks ago in which they had lost five of their men. But the bandits themselves shouted to panic-stricken Maragra workers "This is our reply to the Conference" - a reference to the national Frelimo Party Conference held in Maputo 19 - 23 July, which discussed in detail the question of the war.

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