

## Carnage in a restaurant

Renamo bandits massacred 15 people in an attack on 9 February against a restaurant in Chononanquila, in Boane district, just 16 kilometres west of Maputo.

The bandits launched their raid against the restaurant, belonging to local businessman Antonio Simbine, at about 21.00, when the clientele were watching a music show. In the carnage seven men, three women and five children were murdered, and a further 18 people were wounded.

Suggestions were made by the Portuguese news agency Lusa that the attack had been carried out by ill-disciplined militiamen, but survivors to whom AIM spoke were in no doubt that the raiders were Renamo.

One youngster, 15 year old Hilario Cossa, escaped from the bandits after he and ten others had been forced to carry the booty from the raid (mainly drinks) to a Renamo base in the mountainous region of Matsequenha, near the border with South Africa.

Hilario said that his kidnapers were also adolescents, with the exception of their commander. He put their age at 14 or 15, thus providing further testimony to the systematic use by Renamo of children to commit crimes.

The march to Matsequenha took the best part of two days. Once at the base, which Hilario described as "enormous", the bandits informed their chief, known as "Commander Trinta" that they had killed "many people" in the restaurant. "He began to laugh", recalled Hilario.

Asked what he had heard in the base about current bandit at-

titudes towards Frelimo and the Mozambican government, Hilario said his captors expressed particular opposition to the Chairman of the Mozambican parliament, Marcelino dos Santos, and to Transport Minister Armando Guebuza, on the grounds that they "do not want to negotiate the end of the war with Renamo".

The bandits at Matsequenha were thus completely unaware that Mr Guebuza is in fact the Mozambican government's chief negotiator in the Rome talks between the government and Renamo. According to Hilario Cossa, Renamo commanders in the bush know nothing at all about the peace talks.

Hilario said the atmosphere in the base was extremely tense. About 500 civilians were held prisoner there, they all wanted to escape, but were told they would be killed if they tried to do so.

Hilario made his own getaway when he was sent out in a raiding party to steal cattle, and took the opportunity to slip away under cover of darkness.