

...and returnees from the ex-GDR protest

Mozambican workers repatriated from the former German Democratic Republic staged a mass protest in central Maputo on two days running, 27 and 28 December, in front of the Labour Ministry, demanding payment of the deferred wages owing to them.

Well over 4,000 of the 16,000 Mozambicans in the ex-GDR have now returned, and they are all owed that part of their wages that was sent to Mozambique to be paid in local currency. The amount of money owing to each returnee depends on how long he worked in the GDR. In many cases, the figure runs to several million meticaís.

The protesting returnees accused Labour Ministry officials of long delays in paying these wages. "We were told we would be paid within 15 days", declared one angry demonstrator. "But some of us have been waiting since October".

Some protestors accused officials of corruption, saying they were demanding bribes before agreeing to process the deferred wages.

Several hundred returnees on both days briefly disrupted the midday flow of traffic along 24th July Avenue, one of the busiest thoroughfares in the centre of the city. They also

invaded the Ministry building itself to confront officials.

Police appeared but did not disperse the protestors. Instead, they simply diverted traffic away from the stretch of road in front of the Ministry.

The former migrants daubed slogans in white paint, in both Portuguese and German, on the ministry walls, demanding money and jobs.

The protest seemed to galvanise officials into action, and by 29 December sources in the Ministry were saying that over a thousand cheques had been issued. The protestors were convinced that it was only their direct action that had speeded things up.