

Children enslaved, says US

Argus Africa News Service

MAPUTO. — The Renamo movement still holds about 5 000 children against their will, says the latest US State Department report on human rights in Mozambique.

The document notes "blatant human rights abuses" in the country, including the use of access to humanitarian relief as an instrument of political control.

According to the report, Renamo has refused to allow relief agencies access to areas it controls, and hinders the distribution of agricultural kits.

"Reliable evidence accumulated shows that Renamo continued to hold women and children, about 5 000 of the latter, against their will," the report says. "They live in abysmally

poor conditions and were used as porters, personal servants and guards in Renamo camps."

Women are reportedly used for sex, as are some of the children. The report says that with the end of the war, people in government-controlled territory were generally free to return to their homes, while those under Renamo's control did not always have the same freedom. "In a few cases, Renamo reportedly bartered the children's freedom for material goods or money."

On human rights in Swaziland, the report finds that the general election held last October was not truly democratic as restrictions on political activity in the country and the 20-year-old ban on political parties remains in force. No international observers were invited to oversee the elections.