Frelimo victories. But one million starve

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Meanwhile, places like Mwala have become the symbols of the human cost of a conflict that has claimed hundreds of thousands of civilian lives and sent at least one million people fleeing to neighbouring countries.

A Renamo delegation, reportedly led by Calisto Mavee, captured the town in 1988. Frelimo recaptured the area in December last year. Residents were moved away as the rebels took the town, and they brought back again in January when the army regained control. Two months later, aid agencies were called in. By then, 20 to 30 people were dying of starvation each day.

The story of Mwala is being repeated throughout Zambezia Province, Mozambique’s most fertile and populous region, where the number of people threatened by famine is approaching one million. On October 2, government relief officials in Quelimane, Zambezia’s capital, asked foreign aid agencies for emergency relief to a said a new disaster area around the town of Mueza, where the army had overrun a rebel base and “recovered” 52,000 homeless people.