

Terrorism in

Not only has the South African backed MNR killed thousands of Mozambicans; it has terrorized hundreds of thousands more.

Norwegian journalist, Lars Gronseth recently visited Homoine, scene of the worst MNR massacre ever. He sent us this report:



Emilio Mario, victim of the MNR bandits, was attacked out in the fields when the MNR stole his cattle near Inhambane. In the background: a five year old boy who was hit on the head by the bandits after they had killed his parents.

The hospital director waves his hand across the front of the building: "The dead lay all along the veranda before the funeral." The residents of Homoine, a small town in Southern Mozambique, are still in a state of shock. In July 1987 an MNR attack left 388 people dead. Everyone knows it could happen again.

Hundreds of people are walking out of the town along the dust road into the sunset. They carry their belongings on their heads, as they make for the coast and safety. Evening is the most dangerous time of the day - that is when the bandits attack.

We arrive at Homoine just as the last refugees are on their way out. Of a population of 10 000, only a few hundred remain in the town at night. A few thousand have built houses out of palm leaves on a river bank near the town where they go to sleep.

Signs of destruction

Approximately 300 bandits attacked Homoine. Yet, today there are few signs that there has been fighting here. A few buildings are marked with bullet holes. Two water tower columns have been weakened by explosions. Crosses in the graveyard mark the individual and mass graves. The attackers did not aim to destroy the town. They wanted to terrorize and demoralize the civilian population.

The hospital was one of the bandits' main targets. Palima de Jesus, an elderly nurse responsible for the maternity ward, tells us the story. She was asleep in a room next to the ward when the attack started early in the morning.

"We decided not to go outside. There was a lot of shooting" says

Mozambique

Sister de Jesus. "At ten-o'clock the bandits came and ordered us outside. I took a chance and ran down towards the river. While running I saw a number of people lying dead. I was lucky. I didn't meet the bandits."

A grotesque sight awaited when she later returned to the hospital. Seven mothers who had recently given birth lay dead in a pool of blood, together with their babies.

Campaign of terror

The bandits campaign of terror has had some success. Everyone in Homoine has been affected by the massacre. No one can forget. The survivors try to continue with a normal life, but it is not easy.

Sister de Jesus, and those who remain in the town at night, are still scared: "The situation is serious on the outskirts of the town. We hear shooting every night."

At the provincial hospital in Inhambane, there are a number of victims of MNR attacks. All tell of brutal violence. In the children's ward Emilio Marion lies with a broken back. He was pounded with a heavy stick by MNR bandits who stole the cattle he was watching. A five year old girl lies next to him, moaning and crying. Her parents were killed in a night time attack. She was hit on the head.

No popular support

Stories of MNR atrocities are told everywhere in Mozambique. Even though in some areas people are despondent and disappointed with the Frelimo government, there is no popular support for the MNR.

Observers in Maputo believe that the Homoine attack was part of an MNR offensive to gain control along the coast. In this

area, the MNR now get their supplies by sea. Mozambique's president, Joaquim Chissano told journalists that at the time of the massacre South African ships were seen off the Inhambane coast.

Frelimo regain control

Combined Mozambican and Zimbabwean forces have regained control of the central areas along the Beira corridor and in parts of the Zambezia province. This has resulted in the war moving northward into the Niassa province, and south into Inhambane.

More than 5 million people have been affected by the war. In the North particularly, the social effects have been devastating. In Lichinga, for example, more than 10 000 Mozambicans who were forced by the bandits to leave their homes crowd the outskirts of the town. All the neigh-

South African supplies

boring towns have been attacked.

The once profitable state farm in the area has fallen into disuse. The MNR killed foreign advisors on the farm, destroyed equipment and terrorised the people. Today the train from the coast, bearing valuable supplies, only arrives once or twice a year. People are battling to survive.

It is widely alleged, both in Mozambique and internationally, that South Africa continues to supply the bandits in spite of the Nkomati accord which forbids it from doing so. Few Mozambicans doubt that it is the Botha government in South Africa that is the cause of the problem. Nowhere in Southern Africa will life be normal until apartheid has been destroyed. ■



Top: Victim of the Homoine massacre at Inhambane hospital 3 months after the attack.

Centre: Sister Palima de Jesus survived the massacre.

Bottom: Victims of the MNR bandits at Maputo Central Hospital.