

Hoping for peace in Mozambique

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NN: Which countries are contributing towards the assistance of the Mozambican people?

IM: The countries which are donating towards the country's needy are America, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Norway and almost all the Eastern Block countries.

NN: How does the church relate to refugees?

IM: The council has started a department called the Refugee Department, which looks after refugees and exiles.

In most cases the department caters for South Africans in transit either to Zambia or Tanzania.

NN: Is it easy for church ministers to distribute the donations throughout the country?

IM: Renamo acts of banditry

have made the distribution more difficult for the church.

It has become dangerous for the ministers and people to travel long distances by road. We have resorted to using flights to cover distant areas — to avoid the murder of people by the bandits.

This affects our distribution schedules dramatically.

NN: What are the primary causes of starvation in Mozambique?

IM: Besides the drought, many people who live on food they grow for themselves have been driven away from their rural homes by Renamo.

Some of these people have sought refuge in the towns for protection by the soldiers.

This has increased starvation because these people have to live on donated food.

NN: Do you agree with the

claim by Renamo that they are fighting for the liberation of people from communism?

IM: I don't agree with that claim because one would expect them to fight the Frelimo soldiers if they were opposed to it honestly.

I am happy with the communist government of Mozambique. Therefore I am opposed to any unknown person who claims to be fighting our popular government.

NN: If you say they are not fighting the government, whom are they fighting?

IM: Renamo kills anybody they come across — including children, pregnant women, elderly people and the physically disabled people.

Those who manage to escape have told us that many people were killed because the bandits said that they

could not leave them alive.

NN: What happens to people's property when they are captured by the bandits?

IM: The bandits take away all the goods, all the food, and everything in the house before leaving with the stronger men and children.

They burn and destroy all the food, goods and property they cannot carry with them.

NN: What do they do with the men and children they take away?

IM: When they capture them they tell them that they were going to make them soldiers to fight against the "oppressive communist" government.

NN: How do these acts of banditry affect the people?

IM: These acts affect everybody in Mozambique. These affect our minds. Many people have died as a result of

the Renamo bandits.

NN: Are the bandits using the same tactics of capturing people?

IM: No. They keep on changing strategies. Now they have introduced a new strategy of forcing children aged between 10 and 12 to go with them. In turn they kill other children.

NN: Is the church doing anything to try and resolve this merciless murder of people?

IM: No. So far it is still difficult to establish what can be discussed with these people because we don't even understand what they are really up to.

One of the reasons for the confusion is that it would be possible for us to mediate if they were attacking and destroying government property. In addition we don't

This is the last part of a two-part interview with Reverend Isaac Mahlalela, general secretary of the Christian Council of Mozambique about the situation the church finds itself in that country.

know who they are and what their central point of operation is.

We would like to put this human disaster to an end.

NN: Can one assume therefore that the church has not done anything in trying to stop these acts of banditry?

IM: Recently a delegation of the Christian council appealed to East Germany to help us by mediating in the issue.
