Star

Lynch mobs kill three 'kidnappers' in Maputo

Star Africa Service

MAPUTO — At least three and possibly as many as eight people are reported to have been killed by lynch mobs in Maputo after reports circulated that children were being abducted in the city.

Crowds tried to storm a police station where suspected kidnappers were being held.

The local newspaper, Noticias, said the lynchings began after the news media had reported on Tuesday that a Mozambican who usually lives in South Africa had been arrested on suspicion of kidnapping children. The newspaper said six children had gone missing in December in Maputo.

Later on Tuesday crowds began gathering in several parts of the city and "any stranger seen talking to children was in danger of his life," says the Mozambican news agency, AIM.

Attacked

One man was burned to death and another was fatally beaten by mobs in the suburb of Ferroviario de Mahotas after one of the men had been seen giving sweets to children.

In the suburb of Maxaquene a man identified as Justino Macie was attacked by a mob while sitting in a truck. He was beaten to death. The truck owner, Dique Jose Cossa, said he did not know why Mr Macie should have been suspected of kidnapping children. Mr Macie had been waiting for a mechanic.

AIM reports that a large crowd gathered outside a police station where two suspects were being held and demanded that the two be handed over to them. When the demand was refused the crowd tried to storm the police station and the police had to fire shots into the air to halt the mob.

"The hysteria was such that travelling by car in several Maputo suburbs on Tuesday was a risky business," AIM says. "Even the car used by the Noticias journalists was accused of carrying child-molesters.