

Three held in hunt for killers of leading Mozambican rebel

Reuter in Lisbon

MOROCCAN and French police have detained three Portuguese men wanted for questioning about the abduction and murder of a leading Mozambican rebel, Lisbon police said yesterday.

They said Mr Alexandre Xavier Chagas and Mr Joaquim da Conceicao Messias were arrested last Friday in Casablanca and that Paris police picked up Mr Manuel Pinto da Costa the next day.

Descriptions of Mr Chagas and Mr Messias were issued after the body of Evo Fernandes, a former deputy

leader of the rightwing Mozambican National Resistance, was found on a country road outside Lisbon 12 days ago.

It was the first killing in Portugal of a prominent African exile.

Portuguese authorities said they hoped the three would soon be handed over though they pointed out that no formal extradition treaty existed with Morocco.

The murder investigation centres on whether Fernandes was the victim of a rebel power struggle or killed on the orders of the Mozambique Government, although Maputo has denied involvement.