

Passengers massacred

From Joseph Hanlon
in Maputo

At least 40 people were murdered on Christmas day by guerrillas of the South African-backed Mozambique National Resistance. They died in Murrupala, 35 miles west of Nampula, in the north of Mozambique.

The MNR men stopped an intercity bus, forced the passengers to leave the bus, strip naked, and form lines, then shot them. At least 40 were killed and 20 injured. Six escaped and raised the alarm.

A Portuguese priest in a nearby church interrupted Christmas mass to run and help the injured. The story came out when he talked with

Western diplomats, who then informed the press. The Mozambican Government has not commented.

This is the second massacre of public transport passengers in two months. In early November MNR guerrillas ambushed a train at Savane, 30 miles north of Beira, killing 30 to 50 people. The Mozambican Government decided not to publicise that attack so details remain sketchy, but I was able to confirm this much during a visit to the region recently.

Savane was the site of a similar massacre in August, 1982, when the MNR machine-gunned a passenger train, killing 14 people.

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