

Mozambique: MNR says priests killed in crossfire (ME/0421 B/3 - Excerpt) Lisbon, 31st March: The Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) said Friday [31st March] that three Italian priests had been "caught in crossfire" and killed as rebels clashed with government troops earlier this week. A Renamo statement made available to AFP here added that the rebel movement had "captured alive" a fourth Italian missionary priest during the operation near Quelimane in central Mozambique Monday [27th March]. The Renamo claim contradicted details of the event given this week at the headquarters of the Franciscan Order in Rome, where a spokesman cited reports from Mozambique. According to the rebels, three of the priests were shot in crossfire as the Mozambican army endeavoured to lead them to their mission close to Issasunge garrison, which had been taken the previous day [26th March] by Renamo. Two priests were killed instantly, while a third died of his wounds an hour after the shooting stopped, Renamo said. In Rome, however, a spokesman for the Franciscan Order said the four priests had gone to the mission, which was not permanently staffed because of Renamo attacks, with a group of Mozambican refugees to celebrate Easter. .(AFP in English 1856 gmt 31 Mar 89)