

2 000 flee second attack by Renamo

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FOR the second time in a week, more than 2 000 Mozambicans — mostly children — have fled into South Africa during a fierce battle between Renamo and Frelimo soldiers.

Police said rebels attacked Ressano Garcia, a tiny village on the border, shortly before 8 pm on Monday.

The Mozambique Government and the Renamo rebel movement had resumed negotiations in Rome to end the 15-year war just hours before.

Mortars and machine-gun fire lit up the sky and large groups of people hurriedly made their way to the nearby Lebombo border post.

Gates were opened and the frightened villagers were allowed into the customs area.

South African Defence Force members treated people who had received cuts and bruises during the attack.

All the refugees were repatriated after fighting stopped at about 10 pm.

Reuter reports from Maputo that a British charity's fact-finding trip to Mozambique turned into a mercy mission on Monday when the group flew into a village that had also been attacked by Renamo.

Oxfam executive director Frank Judd said his team's small chartered plane had flown three seriously wounded people 200 km to hospital from Nipepe village in the northern Niassa province.

"The village had been attacked twice by Renamo. The three evacuated villagers were among 25 people wounded by the rebels, who stole food and clothing."

Mr Judd said thousands of people in the area faced starvation.

His team had found only four sacks of grain in the village store. "When you think that the village is a centre for 10 000 people, that's quite a tough situation."

Last Tuesday more than 2 500 Mozambicans, — many of them women with babies — flattened razor-sharp fences and entered South Africa as they fled a Renamo attack on Ressano Garcia. Scores of people received deep cuts.