

Renamo mutilates peasants

Clear evidence of the sadistic behaviour of the Renamo bandits is now in the possession of AIM in the form of photographs of peasants who were brutally mutilated in July in the southern province of Inhambane.

AIM photographed four victims in the Chicucue rural hospital, and one in the provincial hospital in Inhambane town. The bandits had savagely tortured these men and women, cutting off lips, ears and penises.

Sixteen-year-old Mertina Venancio, kidnapped from her family's fields in the district of Panda, suffered perhaps the worst mutilation. The bandits used a bayonet to slit open her genitals, joining her anus and her vagina into the same channel. They then cut off the lips of her vagina.

Florinda Mapulando and Beatriz Silva are old peasant women, also from Panda, who do not know their exact ages. Like Mertina they were abducted on 20 July.

One of their kidnapers cut off Florinda's upper lip, while Beatriz lost her upper lip and her right ear. The bandits gave them the severed organs and told their victims "go and show these to your President".

Alexandre José Malala was kidnapped in the district of Massinga. He was forced to carry goods looted from local people on his head to a Renamo base.

At the edge of the base he was ordered to stop, and bandits hacked off his right ear and his penis. He too was told in mockery to go and show his wounds to President Joaquim Chissano.

Jose Joao, the only victim interviewed in the provincial hospital, was travelling on the main north-south highway with a friend on a motorbike, when they were ambushed by a Renamo group.

The two were marched off by about ten bandits into the bush, but Mr Joao's friend managed to escape. This greatly annoyed his captors, who threatened to kill Mr Joao.

They asked him if he had heard of Renamo mutilating its victims. Mortally afraid, Mr Joao pretended to sympathise with Renamo, saying that he had never heard such reports, and that he knew Renamo was "fighting for freedom".

He recalled that the bandits just laughed at this, and remarked "so you think you're being clever".

After a discussion amongst themselves in Ndaú (a Shona dialect spoken in parts of central Mozambique), the bandits decided to remove Mr Joao's penis. Four of them held him down, while a fifth used a bayonet to cut off his penis.

His tormentors stripped Mr Joao of all his clothing and abandoned him naked in the bush. He managed to walk back to the main road, where he discovered his friend, and the two of them stopped a passing car to take them to hospital.

None of the victims had the slightest doubt that their torturers were members of Renamo. They referred to them as "matsangas" (a common popular term for Renamo throughout Mozambique, which derives from the name of the first Renamo commander-in-chief, Andre Matsangaissa, who was killed by the Mozambican army in 1979).