

# Catholics massacred by Renamo

A massacre on 21 March, at Guiua, just outside the Southern Mozambican city of Inhambane, was directed specifically against a Catholic Church lay training centre, according to church sources who contacted AIM.

Spanish missionary Francisco Lerma, who is Deputy Superior of the Consolata Fathers in Mozambique, travelled to Inhambane to investigate and to attend the funerals of the 23 victims. He revealed that when the raiders attacked there were 14 families living at the Guiua centre, where training for lay catechists was due to restart at the end of March after a three year interruption.

The centre trains lay people to fill leading roles in Catholic communities. In addition the centre housed two Consolata

Fathers, a Kenyan and an Italian, and five Franciscan nuns. Citing survivors of the massacre, Father Lerma said that the raiders appeared after midnight, and went to the houses of the catechists one by one, ordering them and their families out. Two catechists tried to run away and were shot dead. These shots woke the two priests up. They then heard the raiders hammering on the door of the nuns' residence, and calling for two of the nuns by name. But the door was strongly bolted and they failed to break it down.

The bandits then started interrogating the catechists, and demanding information about local garrisons and other military positions. The catechists apparently tried to convince their captors that they had only just arrived in Guiua from other parts of the country and were not familiar with the area, but they were unsuccessful, and a further 21 lost their lives. The victims were hacked to death with knives and bayonets, five of the dead were children.

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