

Mediators hope for ceasefire

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ROME. — The Mozambican Government and Right-wing rebel forces have agreed to appoint mediators in peace talks aimed at ending the war which has cost over a million lives since independence from Portugal in 1975.

A source close to the negotiations said the mediators were optimistic a ceasefire agreement could be worked out in two weeks. The mediators are the Roman Catholic archbishop of the northern Mozambican See of Beira and three Italians.

The main stumbling blocks are the 14,000 Zimbabwean soldiers stationed in Mozambique and the voice the Renamo (Mozambique National Resistance) rebels are demanding in how the country's first multi-party elections next year should be organised.

A previous round of talks in Rome in August broke down when Renamo insisted on the withdrawal of the Zimbabwean troops guarding Mozambique's lines of communications. These are landlocked Zimbabwe's main access to the Indian Ocean.

"Renamo does not object to multi-party elections but to the fact that the government arranged everything," the source said. "Renamo wants to be included in setting up the elections."

Mozambican President Chissano has said Renamo can take part in the elections if it lays down its weapons and operates as a normal political party.

The mediators include Monsignor Jaime Gonçalves, Archbishop of Beira — the man who, appalled by the hardship the war was causing, first called for national reconciliation talks between the marxist government and Renamo rebels.

At the time, Mozambique's late leader Mr Sa-

mora Machel still believed in a military victory with the help of troops from neighbouring Zimbabwe but the government ignored the churchman's initiative.

The three Italian mediators include Mr Mario Raffaelli, a former senior foreign ministry official who still acts as a consultant to the government on African questions.

The talks are taking place in a small religious community in central Rome. The community's leader, Father Matteo Zappi of the Church of Sant'Egidio, is also a mediator.

The third is Professor Andrea Riccardi. — Sapa-Reuter.