

Red Cross appeal to Renamo: Let food in

HARARE. — The International Committee of the Red Cross yesterday appealed to Renamo rebels in Mozambique to allow food and medical supplies into Rebel held areas.

The ICRC said the effects of the 14-year civil war and southern Africa's worst drought this century left most rural communities in Mozambique "desperate" for aid.

In one village alone, at least five people, mainly children and pregnant women, were dying daily, the ICRC said in a statement released here. The village was identified as Liupo in the northern Nampula province.

Impossible

"It has been, and still is, impossible to distribute food in this region," the statement said.

Already, many peasants were wandering deep into the bush hoping to find food. Others fled to neighboring countries "where they are at least safe from attacks, if not from bullets," the statement said.

In the past month, more than 3 000 Mozambicans sought refuge in neighbouring Zimbabwe.

"Some are said to have died on the way," the statement said.

Guarantee

Mr Jean-Daniel Tauxe, the ICRC delegate general for Africa, said Maputo

has given the Geneva-based group a guarantee of safe passage.

Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama has pledged not to attack humanitarian convoys, but the ICRC awaited more specific "operational co-operation" from Rebel commanders in the bush.

The war in Mozambi-

que has claimed more than 600 000 lives since 1977 and left about half the population of 15 million dependent on food aid.

Renamo and the government have been holding periodic peace talks since 1990, but fighting continues throughout the country. — Sapa-AP.