

UN moves to free Renamo hostages

The Argus Foreign Service

MAPUTO. — The United Nations operation in Mozambique, Onumuz, is trying to defuse a crisis in central Mozambique where members of the former rebel movement Renamo have blocked the main road between Maputo and Beira and are holding more than 270 people hostage.

Onumuz sources in Maputo said the Italian chairman of the ceasefire commission, Giorgio Segala, had flown to the Renamo camp at Dombe, about 150 km south-west of Beira, where the hostages were being held.

There are more than 1 000 Renamo members at Dombe, about 200 of whom blocked the road and seized all vehicles travelling to or from Beira.

The mutineers are demanding food, money and immediate demobilisation.

Their camp is one of Renamo's 23 "unassembled points" — sites where soldiers (many of whom are women or disabled) do not have to move to the UN-run assembly points but will be registered and demobilised on the spot.