

SACBC STATEMENT

ON

MAZAMBIQUE REFUGEES (SEPTEMBER 1984)

Hundreds of Mozambican refugees who fled to South Africa to escape the terror tactics of the Mozambican National Resistance say they are sent back to Mozambique by the South African authorities, the Southern African Bishops' Conference reported.

Interviews with refugees in rural areas show that atrocities have increased dramatically since the signing of the Nkomati Peace Accord between South Africa and Mozambique in March 1984.

Many refugees are old women and children, escaping on foot, climbing fences at night and often shot at (it was not known exactly by whom) on their flight to 'freedom'. The journey takes five to seven days as travelling is only at night.

Refugees say they are taken back to the Mozambique border by South African and homeland authorities. At the first opportunity they escape back into South Africa. Indunas (chiefs) are said to act as informers and paid R10 for each refugee identified.

Young men are forced to join the Mozambique National Resistance. Villagers who do not disclose information on the activities and whereabouts of Frelimo, the ruling party in Mozambique, are tortured and killed.

The refugees have fled Mozambique for the past two years and escaped to Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

South Africa is the only country, which has been sending the refugees back to Mozambique.

The Southern African Catholic Bishops' conference approached State President P. W. Botha and in a letter said a *prima facie* case for recognising refugees as political meant South Africa was bound to offer them asylum for, 'Refugees status should also be granted to these Mozambicans in terms of the Geneva Convention'.