

MOZAMBIQUE News reports & clippings

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Editor: Joseph Hanlon (j.hanlon@open.ac.uk)

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Nyusi and Dhlakama meeting in Maputo

President Filipe Nyusi and Renamo president Afonso Dhlakama began a meeting at 11 am local time this morning (Saturday) at a hotel in Maputo.

Dhlakama broke off his tour of the north yesterday to fly to Maputo. Initially he said he would only meet Nyusi if the Mozambican President accepted all of his demands in advance, then he said he would only meet Nyusi if he came to Cabo Delgado. Now he is in Maputo, but the meeting is in a hotel and not a government building, which will be seen as a neutral venue.

Thursday deadline to take parliament seats

Renamo continues to boycott national and provincial parliaments. A group of Renamo members elected to the parliaments met with Renamo president Afonso Dhlakama on Sunday 1 February asking to take their seats, but Dhlakama maintained the hard line and said "anyone who takes their seats would be insulting not Dhlakama, not Renamo, but the thousands of Mozambicans who voted for fair elections". (*MediaFax*, 2 Feb) He argues that the elections were fraudulent and that he won the 2014 election, just as he says he won the four previous elections. The MPs should not take seats in what he sees as fraudulent parliaments.

The national parliament (AR, Assembleia da República) met on 12 January and Frelimo and MDM members took the oath of office, while Renamo boycotted. A special session is planned for next Thursday and Friday (12-13 Feb), primarily to postpone the first ordinary sitting until March, because the new government says it will not have its budget ready before then.

But parliamentary standing orders say that anyone who does not take the oath of office within 30 loses their seat. That means taking their seats in the special session this week.

As this is a list system, if they do not take their seats, the next unelected people on the Renamo lists (and the "supplementary" candidates if needed) would take their places - as happens, for example, with Frelimo MPs who have been named ministers. The AR has a quorum without Renamo and could function, but it is recognised that it would lack political credibility without the main opposition.

This could be a subject of the Nyusi-Dhlakama negotiations, and the standing orders could be amended to allow Renamo to take up its seats later.

Four of the provincial assemblies also cannot function. Renamo has a majority in Zambézia, Tete and Sofala assemblies. The Nampula assembly has 46 Frelimo, 46 Renamo and one MDM. The MDM member was sworn in but then left, so the assembly was not quorate and was unable to elect its speaker.

Renamo threatens response to military moves

The government moved military forces into 16 sensitive areas between 7 and 23 January Renamo says. It claims this is a violation of the 5 September 2014 cease fire, and threatens an unspecified response. (*O País*, 5 Feb) Most are areas where there were confrontations between Renamo guerrillas and government military in the 2013/14 small war.

Renamo claims that government troops have set up four bases in the north of Sofala province, near the main north-south EN1 road. This is not an area of Renamo attacks on the road during the 2013-4 war, but is an area concentration of Renamo forces.

Saimone Macuiane, who heads the Renamo negotiating team for Monday talks with the government, says that on 16 January government troops set up a position with 150 soldiers at Ressardonha, Chupanga, in the north-west of Marromeu district. Five days later 30 men set up a position on the EN1 at Nhaperua in Maringué district between the Nhamapaza and Nhapeua bridges. On 25 January 25 men set up a position in Nhateni, Canxixe, also Marínguè district. Finally a position was set up at Canda in northwest Gorongosa district.

In Tete north of the Zambezi River, Renamo reports 100 men each in Chiritse, Furancungo district; Malilongue, Maravia district; and Mágóè district. In addition it says there are new groups of troops Phofi, Cazula, Chiúta district; Casula in Chiúta town; Chitima; Fingoe; and Tequesse.

Renamo says there have been troop concentrations in three other provinces.

In Inhambane on 17 January on the EN1 troops took up a position 22 km north of the district town of Massinga.

In Manica, troops are based near Mutonono and Munhinga, Sussendenga district - not an area which has had military activity.

In Zambézia, Renamo says that troops were based on 7 January near the Nampevo junction on the main Mocuba-Nampula road north of Mocuba. There were at least three battles between Renamo and government forces in this area in 2013/4.

Renamo had made a complaint to the military team observing the cease fire, EMOCHM (Equipa de Observação da Cessação das Hostilidades Militares). They investigated and in a report Friday 30 January concluded that they "could not obtain any tangible and independent evidence of the alleged violation resulting from the presence of military positions. However, it can be stated that a significant number of police could be noted along our route and at the crossroads". They also noted that the government continues to have military contingents in zones where there had been hostilities, including Muxúnguè, Save, Ripembe, Casanova, Gorongosa, Marínguè, and Inhaminga in Sofala, and Matenje in Tete.

Saimone Macuiane's press statement was an attempt to provide some evidence.

Meanwhile Maculane also accused the police of shooting and killing two Renamo members in their homes near Muxungué, Chibabava, Sofala on 31 January and 1 February. The issue was raised at the press conference after the regular Monday negotiations on 2 February. CanalMoz (6 Feb) quotes government chief negotiator José Pacheco as taking a hard line, not denying the incidents and expressing condolences over the deaths, but saying "our defence and security forces have a mission to defend national sovereignty, territorial integrity, ensure public order, security and peace and act in situations that put at risk lives and public and private goods."

Comment

Would Dhlakama accept anything Nyusi can offer?

Afonso Dhlakama won 1.8 million votes in the presidential election, three times as many as in 2009. This has re-established Renamo as the main opposition force and Dhlakama as a major political figure, which is reinforced by Renamo still having a military force.

The 1992 Rome peace accord was a painstakingly negotiated compromise. But Dhlakama has never again been willing to compromise. This was again underlined by the statement Tuesday by Renamo spokesman António Muchanga that Dhlakama would only meet President Filipe Nyusi if Nyusi agreed in advance to accept all of Dhlakama's demands.

Over the past two decades, Renamo's hard line has won concessions twice. The provincial assemblies were created in 2006 in response to a Renamo demand, and last year, in response to Renamo military action, government allowed Renamo almost any changes it wanted in the electoral law.

As Nyusi and Dhlakama meet for the first time, a key question will be: Can Nyusi offer Renamo anything which Dhlakama could accept?

A key factor is the very different approaches of the two parties. Patronage is important for both Frelimo and Renamo, particularly jobs for loyal supporters. Beyond that, Frelimo has developed a decentralised management structure, where appointed officials have autonomy to act within clear guidelines. Power is held by the Political Commission and leadership has passed peacefully from Chissano to Guebuza to Nyusi. By contrast, Renamo is built around its leader, Afonso Dhlakama, who retains detailed personal power. For example, the Renamo deputy speaker of parliament has been seen during televised sessions sitting at the head table on the phone taking instructions from the party president. Dhlakama has been careful to ensure that no one else has a personal power base, and has expelled from the party effective politicians such as Raul Domingos and Daviz Simango who could be seen as a threat.

Some would argue that Renamo's success in its limited military action in 2013-4 and its electoral success last year vindicates that approach. Changes to the electoral system and the new provincial assemblies provided important patronage appointments. Last year, 295 Renamo people were elected to provincial assemblies, and Renamo had an estimated 18,000 paid people in the elections.

But a closer look at how Dhlakama used his two victories points to problems as well. Renamo had 35,000 people in the electoral administration and observing the voting on 15 October, yet Dhlakama claims they totally failed to stop massive fraud. They were not trained or encouraged to be activist in defence of the party at local and district level. Protests were only made centrally.

Similarly with provincial assemblies. They have limited powers, but must "approve the provincial government programme and inspect and verify its fulfilment". This could become an important local forum to challenge a Frelimo governor and national development policies, but Renamo has never used the assemblies that way. Official election results give Renamo a majority in Zambézia, Tete and Sofala assemblies, but Dhlakama has ordered those elected members not to take up their seats. He has called for a separate Renamo-run government of the north, yet he has not called for elected provincial governors - which is a demand that could be met. Similarly, he boycotted the 2013 municipal elections, which could have given Renamo control of several municipalities. It may be that Dhlakama is concerned about the concept of elected mayors and governors who could develop their own power bases, as Daviz Simango did in Beira.

And it is notable that Dhlakama's demands tend to increase his power. A caretaker government would have been half appointed by him. Similarly Renamo proposals for restructuring the military would increase his power to nominate and control key military figures.

Today's face-to-face talks between Nyusi and Dhlakama are an important first step in resolving the confrontation. But faced with these very different approaches as to how administrative power in Mozambique is wielded, there is a real question of what President Filipe Nyusi could offer Renamo that Afonso Dhlakama would accept. But if nothing is possible, what will happen? *jh*

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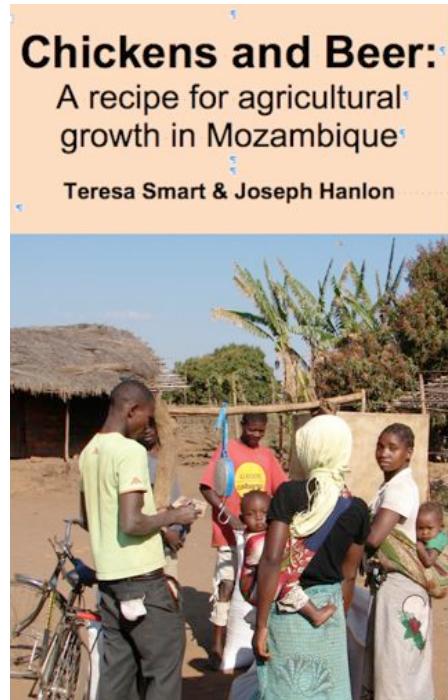
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Joseph Hanlon

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