

Mozambique Political Process Bulletin

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Frelimo remains dominant, but campaign raises profile of local government

Frelimo's overwhelming advantage has become clear as the campaign for municipal elections has continued, and it appears that where Frelimo victories are certain the party has been trying to drum up interest and increase the turnout. Ministers and high officials have been assigned to provinces and have been on the campaign trail all week. By concentrating so much attention on the municipalities, Frelimo is clearly raising the profile both of local government and of these elections.

In most places, Renamo is struggling. There is no central campaign office and no central support, so the campaign is being run by local party offices on their own resources.

Small parties and citizens lists do not seem to be making much of an impression.

For Frelimo, an important show of strength everywhere has been caravans with large numbers of cars and motorcycles driving around the cities and towns. Renamo cannot match this; in Alto Molocué, for example, our correspondent reports that lack of funds has forced Renamo to do its campaigning on foot.

There are widespread reports from our correspondents of Frelimo's use of state cars – from national, provincial and local government as well as state companies and projects. This has been particularly obvious because of the stress on large caravans of cars. For example, in Macia, not a large town, our correspondent listed registration numbers of 14 state cars in use. Where Renamo has access to government vehicles, as in Ilha de Moçambique, it, too, is using them. The notable exception is Angoche, where our correspondent reports that "no one is using state resources in the campaign".

The start of the campaign was marked by sporadic violence, especially confrontations between young men of different parties, and there were perhaps 50 arrests. But after the first few days, even this minor violence ended, and the past week has been totally quiet. It seems as if all the campaigns have reined in their young supporters.

The campaign has stressed local issues such as markets, water, schools and roads. This has been useful because it has forced all parties to look more closely at the

huge needs in the towns and cities – and has probably opened the eyes of some ministers. But all candidates are making grand promises that cannot possibly be fulfilled because of the very limited financial resources of the municipalities.

Interest in the campaign is mixed, according to our correspondents. There is most enthusiasm in places where there are serious contests, such as Angoche, where Frelimo is trying to wrest control from Renamo. In Pemba, despite the presence of an independent citizens list, the outcome seems unquestioned and our correspondent reports “little interest by residents”. In some towns, the crowds are largely children too young to vote.

Campaigning ends today (Sunday) and is not permitted Monday and Tuesday. Voting is on Wednesday.

Simango and Frelimo head-to-head in intense contest in Beira

Beira has become the focus of national interest, with Frelimo desperate to retake control and take advantage of the Renamo split, while independent Daviz Simango hopes to ride to victory on his record as one of the best mayors in Mozambique.

In 2003, Simango won over Frelimo by 29,610 to 23,405 (with 2,407 going to smaller parties). This is close enough that both sides think victory is possible.

Simango is clearly popular and drawing large crowds, so Frelimo has brought in all the big guns. Party secretary-general Filipe Paúnde and Mobilization Secretary Edson Macuácuca were both in Beira on Friday. Provincial Governor Alberto Vaquina and four provincial directors held a press conference Friday to argue that urban improvements claimed by Simango for his administration were really national investments made by the Frelimo central government.

This was clearly the issue around the inauguration of three sets of public water taps (*fontanários*) in the Beira neighbourhood of Inhamízuá. According to the independent daily *O País*, Frelimo mayoral candidate Lourenço Bulha went to officially inaugurate the taps, but community leaders supporting Simango organised a boycott of the ceremonies. In retaliation, claims *O País*, Bulha ordered the water company to remove the handles, which was done. Simango, as present mayor of Beira, then telephoned the head of the water company, and the handles were immediately put back.

Part of the Frelimo campaign is that as the national government, it has the resources to make improvements in Beira. Bulha has even been handing out money at campaign rallies, including 500 Meticaís (\$20) to families in mourning and 2000 Meticaís (\$80) to the parents of recently born twins, according to *Noticias*.

One incident last week showed the tensions and sensitivities. On Thursday the main story in the weekly *Zambeze* was that Bulha was involved in the illegal sale of urban land. Our correspondent in Beira reports that when the newspaper arrived, Bulha supporters tried to buy and burn all 1000 copies sent to Beira. Many went into circulation, however, sold at triple the cover price – and photocopies of the article

were also on sale. (*Zambeze* has published a number of wildly inaccurate and defamatory articles recently, so there is no way of knowing the accuracy of its claim.)

The Bulletin and CIP have set up telephone lines (82 986 5659 and 84 386 5659) to which anyone can send a text message to report on election incidents. One of the first reports of the attempt to buy-up *Zambeze* came from such a “citizen correspondent” and was quickly posted on our election website <http://www.cip.org.mz/pub2008/>.

Meanwhile, Simango supporters and outsiders are worried about the implications of the huge pressure on Frelimo militants to ensure a victory for Bulha. In the 2004 national elections there were significant problems of ballot box stuffing and other misconduct in several provinces by Frelimo members who felt under similar pressure to ensure victory at all cost. In public statements, Simango has said he is especially worried that the police will be used to intimidate voters and his poll watchers (*fiscais*). Domestic and foreign observers and the media all have large teams in Beira watching for problems.

Renamo unwelcome in Gaza

In Gaza, Frelimo enjoys almost total loyalty of the population. It is also a province where Renamo’s war-time atrocities 20 years ago are still an important part of folk memory. Therefore, as in past elections, Renamo has come under special and heavy pressure by many people who seriously believe it has no right to be there. Our correspondents have reported a number of incidents of large groups of Frelimo supporters blocking or intimidating Renamo campaigners.

In 2004, Renamo campaigners and party agents often had trouble finding places to stay. And our correspondent in Manjacaze reports that last week a Frelimo campaign caravan stopped in front of a house rented by a Renamo member to demand that the owner stop renting to Renamo.

Comment

When is a suggestion really an order?

An SMS came on Tuesday claiming staff from a particular hospital has been forced to abandon their patients to attend a Frelimo rally. We asked our local correspondent to check and the report was that some hospital staff did go to the rally, but patients were not left unattended.

But TVM news on Thursday night showed a large Frelimo meeting of Beira hospital workers. And there have been numerous reports of officials in government offices and state companies “suggesting” to staff that they should join the Frelimo party and participate in rallies, even during working time.

Increasingly, government sector workers are worried that their promotion and perhaps even their job is dependent on membership in the ruling party. So far there seems no evidence of people being discriminated against for failing to join the party and attend rallies. But the fear is unquestionably there. When the boss “suggests” or “urges” that staff go to a Frelimo rally, it is increasingly seen as an order.

Clearly Frelimo has substantial genuine support among teachers, health workers and other civil servants (*funcionários*). But there is also a growing backlash, of people who feel they are being pushed too far and who fear that a suggestion is an order.

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