

MOZAMBIQUE News reports & clippings

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

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Guebuza losing power in presidential battle

Few people are willing to predict the outcome of the Frelimo Central Committee meeting, which opens tomorrow and is expected to choose Frelimo's presidential candidate. The meeting runs until Sunday 2 March at the party school in Matola.

The constitution has a two-term limit so President Armando Guebuza cannot stand again. But he organised to have himself elected president of Frelimo in order to control the choice of his successor. Party secretary-general Filipe Paunde is a Guebuza loyalist, and at the party Congress in September 2012 a Political Commission sympathetic to Guebuza was elected. But growing opposition inside the party means Guebuza may not succeed..

Frelimo always maintains a united face to the outside and will support whomever is chosen as candidate. But there are bitter struggles inside. The constitution at the time would have allowed Joaquim Chissano to stand again in 2004, but Guebuza organised an internal rebellion and was named the presidential candidate.

History now repeats itself, with Chissano becoming the focus of opposition to Guebuza. Graça Machel is also said to be helping organise the anti-Guebuza campaign. Chissano was replaced because it was said that under his leadership the party elite had become corrupt, self-interest dominated over national interest, and Chissano had done badly in the 1999 national election. Exactly the same is being said about Guebuza now, with people also pointing to the unexpectedly good showing of the opposition in municipal elections last November.

Guebuza's image has also been damaged by the confrontation with Renamo. The attempt to defeat Renamo guerrillas militarily has failed. Last week Frelimo ignominiously caved in almost completely to Renamo demands for changes to the electoral law, making concessions that could have been made a year ago.

The Guebuza faction maneuverers began with the Political Commission choice of three "pre-candidates", all Guebuza loyalists, to be presented to the Central Committee. They are Prime Minister Alberto Vaquina, Agriculture Minister Jose Pacheco and Defence Minister Filipe Nyussi. Frelimo secretary-general Paunde then made a public statement saying there was "no space" for further names. The response was a public campaign to say the Central Committee was free to make its own decisions and could not be controlled by Paunde.

Meetings earlier this week of important party groups show the split. The Association of Veterans of the National Liberation Struggle (ACLLN) meeting last weekend called for Paunde and the entire secretariat to be replaced, and for more presidential candidates to be considered. The Veterans have a very strong role in the party - they include not only the old guard, but also the children of many of the key figures in Frelimo.

But the daily O Pais reports this morning that in its meeting yesterday, the party youth wing (OJM) remained loyal to Guebuza, backing Paunde and the three pre-candidates.

It appears that the opponents of Guebuza have chosen to start the fight by going after the party secretariat, and will try to replace Paunde - probably with their preferred presidential candidate, former prime minister Luisa Diogo. If this succeeds, she would be put forward as one of the pre-candidates.

It will be close, with both sides counting votes, and with intense internal negotiations between the party elders. Many central committee members will hope that the party "elephants" will sort this out between them. But there will probably first have to be some procedural votes over the party secretariat and number of pre-candidates, to test the strength of the two sides.

Guebuza wants one of his three pre-candidates, and probably will show no preference. His opponents want Luisa Diogo. There is palpable hostility between Guebuza on one side and Chissano and Diogo on the other. If the forces remain closely balanced, a likely compromise candidate is Eduardo Mulembwé, former speaker of parliament. Several other possible candidates have been running campaigns, including on Facebook, including Eneas Comiche, former mayor of Maputo; Aires Alí, former prime minister; and Tomas Salomão, former finance minister and former executive secretary of SADC. They are less likely as presidential candidates, but could become speaker of parliament or prime minister as part of the negotiations, as a way of ensuring regional balance.

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This mailing list is used to distribute two publications, both edited by Joseph Hanlon. This is my own sporadic "News reports & clippings", which is entirely my own responsibility. This list is also used to distribute the *Mozambique Political Process Bulletin*, published by CIP and AWEPA, but those organisations are not linked to "News reports & clippings" Joseph Hanlon

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Mozambique media websites:

Noticias: www.jornalnoticias.co.mz

O Pais: www.opais.co.mz

Macauhub English: www.macauhub.com.mo/en/

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AIM Reports: www.poptel.org.uk/mozambique-news

Carlos Serra Diario de um sociologo: <http://oficinadesociologia.blogspot.com>

Good daily newsletters:

English: Mozambique Investor. Send e-mail to joaquim.fale@clubofmozambique.com

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