

MOZAMBIQUE News reports & clippings

281 3 March 2015 Editor: Joseph Hanlon (j.hanlon@open.ac.uk)

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Election study collaboration: We have detailed election data from 1999 through 2014 and are inviting scholars to use this data collaboratively. Contact j.hanlon@open.ac.uk for the link.

Gilles Cistac gunned down

Prominent constitutional lawyer Gilles Cistac was assassinated this morning at a café in central Maputo.

The respected, if controversial, professor at the law school of Universidade Eduardo Mondlane had finished his regular breakfast at Café ABFC (formerly Wimbe) at the corner of avenidas Mártires da Machava and Eduardo Mondlane at 8.30 and was getting into a car. He was shot from a passing car. Police spokesperson Arnaldo Chefo said there were four people, three black and one white. He was shot five times by the white man with an AKM assault rifle. The driver took him to the nearby central hospital, where he died early this afternoon. (AIM, @Verdade)

Cistac is of French origin, and was 53 years old. He lived and worked in Mozambique since 1993 and became a Mozambican citizen. He has advised Defence, Tourism and State Administration ministers. He was an advisor to the Administrative Tribunal (AT, which oversees public expenditure) and was getting into a taxi to go to the AT when he was shot.

O Pais on its website has published a picture of the bloody Cistac lying on the ground after being shot - <http://opais.sapo.mz/index.php/sociedade/45-sociedade/34703-morreu-gilles-cistac.html>



Attacked for his advice?

Cistac has recently come under attack on social media, including from an unidentified Facebook troll writing under the name "Calado Calachnikov" which could be interpreted to mean "secret machine gun". The troll accused Cistac of being a spy and traitor, and said he and other prominent white men were subverting the country.

The attacks followed Cistac's entry into the debate about Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama's demand for an autonomous "Republic of Central and Northern Mozambique" or at least power in the provinces which voted in favour of Renamo on the 15 October 2014 elections.

Frelimo's response was that this would be unconstitutional, violating the constitutional statement that Mozambique is a "unitary state". Cistac was an expert on municipality law and decentralisation and he wrote that there was a way to partly meet Dhlakama's demand. He noted that Maputo city is both a municipality and a province, so it has an elected mayor and assembly as a municipality and an appointed governor as a province. As this has never been challenged as unconstitutional, something similar could be extended to all provinces. Not all constitutional experts agreed with Cistac, but Dhlakama adopted this framework.

In two meetings between President Filipe Nyusi and Dhlakama on 7 and 9 February it was agreed the Renamo would take up its parliamentary seats and Renamo will present a preliminary proposal [anteprojecto] to parliament [Assembleia da República] relating to what he called autonomous provinces or an autonomous region. Dhlakama said "the agreement is that the parliamentary benches will take it seriously, because this is not a normal proposal of the opposition that is just voted down by the majority party," according to Radio Moçambique (9 Feb) The next parliamentary meeting is later this month, and Renamo has not presented its preliminary proposal yet.

Frelimo panic & Renamo threats

The response of Frelimo to the Nyusi-Dhlakama agreement was rapid and unexpected. Members of Frelimo's ruling Political Commission quickly went out to all provinces to tell people that the proposal for regional autonomy would destroy national unity and is unacceptable. And they came back reporting that the people did not want autonomous provinces.

Savana (20 Feb) interpreted this as a split in Frelimo, with Armando Guebuza as head of the party trying to undermine Nyusi's negotiations. But Nyusi had already made clear that although parliament had to seriously debate the proposal, it did not have to accept it. This was very different from changes to the elections law last year, where government was committed to accept Renamo demands.

The issue is real, at two levels. Frelimo has always stressed unity, and has prevented the party from splitting and has prevented regional, ethnic and language differences from dividing the country, as has happened in many other places. Thus the commitment to national unity is real. But at another level, the highly centralised government under Frelimo gives the party quite tight control; for example, appointed governors wield immense power and Frelimo does not want to share that power. Indeed, it has repeatedly tried to undermine opposition controlled municipalities such as Beira, Quelimane and now Nampula.

Dhlakama responded to the Frelimo campaign by taking a very hard line. On 26 Feb speaking on at a rally in Montepuez, Cabo Delgado, Dhlakama said "if Frelimo does not approve the project, that will even be good, because we shall remove it from power by force. It will lose everything, and we are able to do that". (AIM, STV)

Government-Renamo talks deadlocked

Meanwhile the Monday talks between Renamo and the government remain deadlocked, and no Renamo fighters have been demobilised. Thus Renamo remains in the unusual position of being the main opposition political party in parliament, but having its own armed force and threatening to overthrow the government.

Renamo is demanding complete politicisation of the army, police and security services similar to what was agreed for the electoral authorities, but it is demanding total de-politicisation of the government.

Renamo argues that nearly all of its people who joined the army after the 1992 peace agreement were marginalised or pushed out. Thus it wants a complete restructuring of the armed forces to prevent that happening again. Only after agreement on that will it send its fighters into the army and police.

And at the Monday negotiating session, in the discussion of separating party and civil service, Renamo demanded that during the government working day (07.30 to 15.00) the President, “ministers and other state office holders cannot undertake political party activities,” according to the head of the Renamo delegation, Saimone Macuiana,

The head of the government delegation, Agriculture Minister Jose Pacheco, thought it made no sense that political figures such as the President, should be barred from political activities. “When the head of state appoints a minister, that’s a political activity, even though he is a servant of the state”, he said. It would be a complete distortion of the Mozambican state to decree that politicians could not engage in politics, Pacheco added, and there was no way the government could accept such a demand. (AIM)

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Joseph Hanlon

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Mozambique media websites:

Noticias: www.jornalnoticias.co.mz

O Pais: www.opais.co.mz

On Facebook:

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

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

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

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