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STAE Director in Quelimane resigns after failure of secret agreement with Renamo

The district director of STAE (Electoral Administration Technical Secretariat) in Quelimane had a secret agreement with one of his deputies, appointed by Renamo, to grant him 32 places to be filled by registration brigade members from Renamo. But the agreement failed because, four days after the start of voter registration, the head of the Department of Organisation and Electoral Operations (ROOE) decided to transfer some of the Renamo brigade members to other registration brigades. The decision did not please the STAE Deputy Director, who “has his own staff, including his wife (placed as a supervisor in the 17 September EPC) in these brigades”. And so a conflict broke out.

A Zambezia Province Multi-sector Commission of Inquiry was established. It concluded that the head of ROOE, Vitorino Azevedo, justified the change of brigade members with the argument that he had made a short study which he shared only with the district director, Assane Ussene, excluding the deputy heads of the ROOE representing Frelimo, Renamo and the MDM. In fact, the head of the ROOE was obeying an instruction from director Assane Ussene.

Believing that he had been betrayed by the decision of the STAE District Director, taken without his consent, the Renamo Deputy Director, Maia Madeira Maia, decided to block the transfer of the brigade members, claiming that the decision was “poisoned because it had not been discussed in the ROOE”, before being submitted to the leadership collective.

For his part, STAE District Director Ussene, seeing his authority called into question by his deputy, decided to go into the field to put his decision into operation by dismissing the brigade members concerned. The deputy director then retaliated, by filming the moment when his director sacked the brigade members from his party’s area of influence “to be used as evidence of the arbitrary behaviour of the district director”.

Maia Madeira Maia told the Multi-sector Commission of Inquiry that the prelude to the transfers occurred on 21 April, just a day after the start of voter registration, when he received from the head of the ROOE, Vitorino Azevedo, a message, at 05.30, informing him that brigade members would be moved to meet the demand for their services.

In response, Maia told the head of the ROOE that this decision would not be possible unless it was supported by a prior study of the performance of the brigade members to be moved, since only a day had passed since the start of registration. In fact, the decision was put into operation on 24 April. Four days had elapsed since the start of voter registration.

Because of this, the Commission that carried out the inquiry recommended disciplinary proceedings against the two directors “for proven lack of transparency in the selection of brigade members”, which affected the voter registration. It concluded that it was “lack of transparency in the selection of brigade members” which led to the struggle between the director, Assane Ussene, and his deputy, Maia Madeira Maia (from Renamo), for control over the area of party influence, which contributed to “the poor performance of voter registration” in Quelimane.

Both are facing disciplinary proceedings “for proven lack of transparency in the selection of brigade members”, which affected compliance with the voter registration targets”. Assane Ussene has resigned and will be replaced by Lourenço Francisco Álvaro Fato, a member of staff at the Zambezia provincial STAE delegation.

Agreement was made five days before the registration

It all began on 15 April, in Quelimane, during the selection of brigade members for the voter registration, due to begin on 20 April. On that date, Maia Madeira Maia, the deputy director representing Renamo, sent a message to the STAE district director, Assane Ussene, requesting that he be given 32 of the 52 places for brigade members. He threatened that, if this did not happen, “he had sufficient evidence to tarnish the process” and that he “would not allow the list of trainees to be fixed”.

The same report said that the district director, Assane Ussene, feeling under pressure, gave up the 32 places for brigade members in the areas of influence of the two men (the director and his deputy). But, during the registration, it was claimed that the Renamo brigade members tended to have “greater difficulty in handling the computers” (known as Mobile-IDs) than those recruited in the normal way. This resulted in longer queues, and complaints about the attendance of citizens who wanted to register.

Constitutional Council finds in Renamo’s favour and gives RD 10 days to change its symbol

The [ruling of the Constitutional Council](#) explains that the use of historical figures of Renamo by the breakaway party, Democratic Revolution (RD), “may cause confusion among the electorate at the moment when they are expressing their wishes”. The RD symbol has pictures of the first Renamo commander, André Matsangaïça, and his successor, Afonso Dhlakama. That might lead voters “to vote by mistake for the candidates of the RD, when in fact they wanted to vote for Renamo”.


The Constitutional Council considered that the RD’s argument that there is no design similarity between the symbols of the two parties, in terms of the Law on political parties, should not be accepted because the question of the similarity or identity of symbols and acronyms “cannot be reduced only to the visual or graphic element”. Instead, the substantive identity of the symbols must be analysed, taking into account their impact on the electorate, which should make a free and conscious choice, without confusion, when voting for candidates.

The ruling says that the freedom given to political parties to choose their names, acronyms and symbols cannot be regarded as absolute or unlimited. For it runs up against limits in the Constitution, and particularly in the Law, according to which, in the case under consideration, electoral symbols may not coincide or be confused with those of other parties, coalitions, or independent groups of citizens.

Renamo had presented its complaint against the RD on 14 July at the National Elections Commission (CNE). It wanted the RD banned from the municipal elections on the grounds that it

was using Renamo symbols. But the CNE threw this appeal out, because the Frelimo supporters on the CNE argued that there was no similarity between the symbols used by the two parties. The CNE noted that the Renamo symbol consists of a partridge, ten yellow stars and three arrows, displayed horizontally from left to right; while the RD symbol is a blue square against a white background with a picture of the first Renamo commander, André Matsangaïça, in the lower left corner, and that of his successor, Afonso Dhlakama, in the upper right corner.

The decision was put to a vote, and the Frelimo majority on the CNE voted against the Renamo complaint. Renamo did not accept this and, that same week, it lodged an appeal with the Constitutional Council. (For more details, see [Bulletin 115](#)).

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