

NEWSLETTER — GENERAL ELECTIONS 2024 — FRELIMO — ALBERTO CHIPANDE — ESPERANÇA BIAS — MAPUTO AIRPORT

From liberators to enemies of the people

The election dispute has opened up a deep well of long-standing anger against ruling party Frelimo

ZITAMAR NEWS

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Good afternoon. This morning in Pemba, the capital city of Cabo Delgado province, protesters tore down a statue of Alberto Chipande, a (living) veteran of Mozambique's war of independence and a former defence minister. A [video](#) shared on social media shows the statue being dragged along the ground. It was a vivid symbol that the demonstrations engulfing the country at the moment are about more than just a perception that the elections in October were stolen. It is not just statues of Frelimo politicians that are being attacked: Esperança Bias, the Frelimo speaker of the parliament, was pelted with stones yesterday (see below).

The statue of Chipande was probably targeted not just because he represents ruling party Frelimo, which has undoubtedly masterminded much of the vote-rigging, but also because he is perceived to have enriched himself at the expense of the province. Chipande has numerous business interests in Cabo Delgado, including in the crime and corruption-ridden timber trade, and his properties have been attacked by insurgents in the past. Houses built on land Chipande controlled, to which he did not object for a long time, were demolished in the past and the occupants were left homeless.

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A statue of Alberto Chipande, the Frelimo veteran said to have fired the first shot of the liberation war and who went...



All this speaks to a deep-seated resentment against Frelimo and, more generally, the people in power, which has been unleashed by the dispute over the election results. The party is seen, not without justification, as having kept the masses poor and deprived while making money for itself and its elites. If Frelimo did not know it before, it is discovering that people have a lot to be angry about.

The protests around the heavy mineral sands mine operated by Kenmare Resources in Nampula province's Moma district yesterday are a symptom of the same kind of feeling. Mining companies are often the focus of anger from locals in their area for failing to deliver expected benefits in the form of development projects like schools and health centres — projects that are needed because of a lack of government provision. Around the Moma mine there is dissatisfaction about the lack of a bridge connecting Moma and Larde districts across the Larde river, a project that Kenmare and the government were supposed to fund, but which has not been delivered, allegedly due to the government. Once again, people feel deprived and let down while perceiving that others are doing very well.

Throwing stones at people is no way to achieve social justice. But it does reflect the fact that, under 49 years of Frelimo rule, ordinary Mozambicans have not had any way of peacefully driving political change. Multi-party elections have only existed since 1994, and since at least 1999, every election has been affected by fraud. The elections this year and last year made it particularly obvious that the ballot box does not change anything.

Frelimo, with its socialist roots, has always sought to present itself as a friend of ordinary people, for example by claiming the credit for public works projects actually paid for by private companies. Today however, the attitudes of ordinary people mean that it is no longer safe to wear a Frelimo T-shirt in a big city. Frelimo activists face harassment and online threats. It has thus become impossible for the party to promote its populist image. In the eyes of demonstrators, Frelimo is now the enemy of the people.

Whether this will force Frelimo to address the political crisis remains to be seen, but nobody can ever look at the party in the same way again.

Agenda:

Today: President Filipe Nyusi visits Tete province

Today's headlines:

- **Business conditions decline due to protests, says Standard Bank** ([Lusa](#))
- **Stone throwing greets Esperança Bias in Manica** ([Integrity](#))
- **Protests leave dozens of passengers stranded at Maputo airport** ([Lusa](#), [MZNews](#))

Business conditions decline due to protests, says Standard Bank ([Lusa](#))

Business conditions in Mozambique took a sharp fall in November, as measured by the purchasing managers' index (PMI) published by Standard Bank. The PMI fell from 50.2 in October to 48.4 last month, the sharpest fall since January 2022 and one which the bank attributed to protests and work stoppages in the wake of the contested elections in October. A number under 50 indicates that overall business activity at more than half of businesses declined in the month. Orders decreased, production times increased due to supply chains being affected, and job losses, although modest, were at their fastest rate since March 2021. It is the first fall in the PMI below 50 in seven months and it ends a nine-month trend of growth in new orders. As business conditions deteriorated, one measure taken by companies to control costs was to reduce their operating capacity in November. Fáusio Mussá, the bank's chief economist, said risks to economic growth had increased, with the bank forecasting 3.3% GDP growth and 5.8% inflation in 2025.

In June of this year, the government was forecasting 5.5% GDP growth. But as we [noted](#) this week, that looked impossible even before the protests started in October: growth in the first nine months of this year averaged 3.8%. The demonstrations are simply making a bad situation worse, although the sharp fall in the PMI figure indicates that they have caused a deep pessimism among business executives.

Stone throwing greets Esperança Bias in Manica ([Integrity](#))

The motorcade of Esperança Bias, head of the ruling Frelimo party's central brigade for political support in Manica province, was pelted with stones in the Nhamaonha neighbourhood, in the Manica town of Chimoio on Wednesday. Bias and her entourage were visiting the Frelimo offices in the area, which had been set on fire on 21 October during the first phase of demonstrations over the disputed election results called by opposition presidential candidate Venâncio Mondlane. Reports also claimed that people threw stones at a group of Frelimo members in Sofala province's Buzi district on Wednesday afternoon. The members were attending a

meeting led by Eneas Comiche, a member of Frelimo's Political Commission and head of the central brigade for political support in Sofala.

The central brigades are meant to represent the party headquarters in the provinces. They transmit instructions from the central party to the provincial and district organisations and they report back to the centre on implementation. A local journalist has confirmed that the reports of a stoning in Buzi are wrong. There was a march nearby organised by opposition party Podemos, and police fired shots in the air to disperse protesters, but no stones were thrown and the meeting was not disrupted. Bias is also the outgoing speaker of the Mozambican parliament.

Protests leave dozens of passengers stranded at Maputo airport ([Lusa](#), [MZNews](#))

Dozens of people have been stuck for hours at Maputo's international airport waiting to catch a plane, due to restrictions on travel as a result of demonstrations called by opposition presidential candidate Venâncio Mondlane. Under the terms of the demonstrations, vehicles must not travel between 8am and 4pm. Some passengers have arrived at the airport at dawn to wait for their flights, as access roads to the airport are blocked during the daytime. Some travellers going to the airport were also forced to hand over money to people blocking the road at so-called "illegal tollgates".

Special arrangements have been organised for crews and supplies to be available at the airport despite the road blockages. Up to now, no airline has cancelled its flights to Maputo.

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