

Mozambique Political Process Bulletin

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Local elections:

General calm with isolated violence

Frelimo dominance but some real contests

A generally calm campaign for local elections on 19 November continues to be marred by incidents of violence and arrests, notably in Sofala and Tete provinces. In Beira on Monday the Christian Council held a press conference to call on the parties for calm and restraint.

In some places, both main parties seem to be encouraging youngsters (below voting age) to pull down posters and disrupt marches of the other party – and in a few cases even to throw stones at members of other parties.

Our correspondents report a lower key and more locally focused election than in the 1998 and 2003 local elections. In places such as Vilankulo, where Frelimo's dominance is clear and the mayor is popular, there is little interest in the campaign. But in others, such as Gorongosa, which is a new municipality and there is a serious contest between PDD, Renamo and Frelimo, there has been more interest shown in the campaign.

Frelimo has been showing its power and support from local business through large caravans of cars. In Maxixe, Frelimo opened its campaign with a parade of 100 cars, while Renamo started with just one car. In Beira, cars willing to join the Frelimo parade were given free 10 litres of fuel by a local petrol station. Reports continue to come in from our correspondents of Frelimo using state vehicles and of many government officials working on the campaign instead of carrying out their normal jobs.

Increased transparency for observers

National and foreign election observers have been given increased access in new observer regulations published last month. A wide range of formerly secret election commission documents are now public, and observers are now allowed to watch the previously secret summation process by election commissions. The new regulations are posted on our website (www.cip.org.mz/pub2008/index.asp) and the CNE website (www.stae.org.mz)

But the new regulations also impose new restrictions on observers. Apparently they can only be authorised to observe in one municipality (which means, for example, they cannot observe in both Maputo and Matola). (Art 22.3) Observers are not allowed to make public comments until their organisation has first made a statement. (Art 26.2.e) And the CNE reserves the right to restrict the ways international observers can “communicate” and to set rules on how observers are to be “accompanied” (Art 28) – which the international community sees as unacceptable restrictions on the freedom of observers.

Regulations are also made more bureaucratic. All observers must present a CV (Art 19.1). All drivers and interpreters are required to register as observers (Art 26.2.m) but this may conflict with the requirement that Mozambicans cannot have the status of international observers (Art 6.2)

In the 2004 election many election regulations were kept formally secret (even though they were distributed to thousands of polling stations) and last year when the Bulletin asked for access to this information, it was denied. The new regulations reverse this, and make all key documents public.

The regulations (Art 25.1.g) give observers the right to: “Consult the deliberations, directives, regulations, and instructions issued by the National Elections Commission and STAE on material relating to the voting.”

Votes are counted in each polling station in public, with press, observers and party delegates present. But in the past the summation process carried out by the election commissions has always been secret, including unexplained changes to results sheets submitted by polling stations. The new rules open up many of these processes.

The regulations (Art 25.1.c) give the observers the right to: “Observe the operations following the voting at all levels, namely the centralisation and summation of electoral results at district, city, provincial and central level, including the announcement, validation, and proclamations of electoral results.” But it remains unclear if observers will be able to watch revalidation of invalid votes (*nulos*) and discussions about the rejection or changing of polling station results sheets (*editais*), and if observers will have access to changed and rejected *editais*.

The final section of the regulations (Art 28), which international agencies feel can be used to control observers, seems unclear, and states: “Article 28: Accompanying the observation 1. Entities recognised and given observer credentials must communicate in organised forms adopted for this purpose by the National Elections Commission, referring to internationals, 2. The National Elections Commission has the authority to define modalities for the accompanying of observers.”

The restriction of observers to a single municipality is actually an inference drawn from the regulations. Articles 7 and 22 restrict observers to a single *circulo eleitoral*. But this phrase is not defined in the law on municipal elections. Since the phrase is defined as a province in the national election law and the district in the provincial election law – in both cases the area covered by electoral lists – it is *assumed* to mean the municipality in the observer regulations.

Renamo candidate released

The Renamo candidate for mayor of Manjacase, Sarmento Bernardo Malombe, who had been arrested on 31 October for allegedly forging a signature on one of his candidacy documents, was released from jail on 11 November.

Nampula market ejects opposition

Candidates of both PDD and Renamo have forcibly be expelled from Resta market in Nampula, reports our correspondent Luis Rodrigues. Allegedly the market head said the market was built by Frelimo and thus other parties could not campaign there. The market head denies this. Police were called to the market to protect the PDD mayoral candidate Monday.

In Mocimboa da Praia Renamo complained that the police were disrupting their campaign by not allowing them to campaign in two neighbourhoods, Muengue and 30 de Junho, seen as Frelimo strongholds, in order to avoid violence. The policy deny this, noting that when Renamo submitted its campaign plan, it did not propose going to those neighbourhoods. District Commander Silva Paulo added, however, that if Renamo did plan to campaign in those neighbourhoods, the police should be told in advance so that they could provide protection.

21 in jail in Sofala

Sofala police said Monday they were holding 21 people in jail on election related charges. They are members of Frelimo and Renamo and supporters of independent candidate Daviz Simango, and from Beira, Dondo and Marromeu. They are accused of being involved in violence and in destruction of opposition posters (which is illegal under the electoral law). The most serious incident of the election so far occurred in Dondo last week when members of Frelimo and Renamo clashed with catanas (machetes), causing serious injuries requiring hospitalisation on both sides.

Individual Renamo members have been hospitalised in Tete and Nampula after attacks by youths, in one case wearing Frelimo t-shirts. Renamo is also claiming intimidation by Frelimo in Chibuto and Maxixe.

Six Renamo members were arrested in Nampula province during the weekend – four in Nampula city and one each in Ilha de Moçambique and Angoche. Four are accused of attacking Frelimo members and two of attacking a Frelimo car.

One Frelimo member in Mocimboa da Praia has been arrested for tearing down Renamo posters.

Parties sign conduct code in Mocimboa da Praia

In Mocimboa da Praia Frelimo and Renamo have signed an agreement committing themselves to tell their members and supporters to conduct themselves with civility and without aggression, to avoid the violence that occurred in 2005 after a very close and hard fought by-election, reports our correspondent Jonas Wazir.

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