

Mozambique Political Process Bulletin

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Massive turnout overwhelms Renamo & voting system

People were still voting at midnight last night, as the massive turnout totally overwhelmed the polling stations, forcing many to remain open well after the official 6 pm (1800) closing.

Renamo is also heading for a major defeat. Of the five cities where it had the mayor, it has already lost Marromeu, Angoche and Iha de Moçambique.

In Beira, Manuel Pereira, the Renamo candidate imposed by the party president Afonso Dhlakama is doing very badly, while Daviz Simango, the previous Renamo mayor, standing as an independent, seems to be heading for a clear victory. In Beira, Frelimo is currently ahead for municipal assembly and is claiming victory.

In Nacala partial results are too close to call.

Frelimo is winning in all other municipalities. So far, only in Gurue was the result close – the Frelimo candidate for mayor gained 50.3% of the vote and avoided a second round only by 129 votes.

Voting until late at night

Each polling station serves up to 1000 registered voters, and with such a high turnout, they proved unable to handle them all in a single 11-hour day. The system assumes that on average a polling station can process each voter in less than one minute, but in practice finding the name in the register and explaining how to vote takes more time. The process was slow and large queues built up.

The law states that everyone in the queue at 6pm (1800) is allowed to vote, and this was correctly carried out nearly everywhere (although there were reports in Beira and Matola of voters in queues being turned away). Voting continued until midnight in Monapo and after 2300 in Beira, Nacala, Mocimboa da Praia, and other places. This, in turn, delayed the counting, and some polling stations had still not completed their counts by mid-morning.

Anger in Beira

There were two outbreaks of violence in Beira. At one school in Munhava, people waiting in the queues at 1800 were given numbered tickets (*senhas*) to prove they were in the queue, as is supposed to be done, but then all polling stations in the school closed and did not allow these people to vote. The result was a riot. Ordinary and riot police (PIR) were called and they fired in the air to disperse the crowds. But after discussion, the polling stations then reopened, and voting continued until after 10 pm.

Then around 1 am rumours of radio reports claiming a Frelimo victory led an agitated crowd to storm 7 April school in Chipangara in Beira demanding the results, even though counting had not finished. Again the riot police intervened, this time with tear gas.

In Dondo there was a punch-up between Renamo and Frelimo supporters.

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