

MOZAMBIQUE News reports & clippings

282 19 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.

Renamo proposal for provincial autonomy

Renamo Monday tabled its parliamentary bill for more autonomous provincial governments. The bill will be considered at the next parliamentary session, which begins Tuesday 31 March. The bill is available on <http://1drv.ms/1CyzXM>

The proposal carefully follows the current practice of dual administration for the elected municipal governments, where there is an elected assembly and president (mayor) but the central government also appoints a senior figure - a governor for the city of Maputo (which also has the status of a province) and district administrators for the municipalities.

Thus there would be an elected assembly and an elected "council president" but there would still be an appointed governor. Following the municipal model, the council would be local "ministers" named by the council president.

Renamo proposes that this would initially apply only in the six provinces where did it best in elections. This year, for the first decentralised provincial governments, the presidential candidate with the most votes in that province (Afonso Dhlakama in five of the six) would name the "council presidents" with the approval of the assembly, and the already elected provincial assemblies would also become the assemblies under the new law. Full elections would take place as part of the 2019 national elections.

Dhlakama & Renamo dominance

Dhlakama and Renamo have clear majorities in Zambézia, Tete and Sofala. Frelimo and Nyusi have majorities in Niassa. In Nampula and Manica, Dhlakama won a majority, but the provincial assembly is closely divided, and the approval of a Dhlakama nomination would require the support of the MDM.

The six provinces, the presidential votes, and the composition of the provincial assemblies, are:

Niassa (Ny 48.5%, Dh 44.4%; F 42, R 34, MDM 4)

Nampula (Dh 49.4%, Ny 44.6%; F 46, R 46, M 1)

Zambézia (Dh 52.5%, Ny 39.2%; R 51, F 37, M 4)

Tete (Dh 49%, Ny 46%; R 42, F 37, M 3)

Manica (Dh 49%, Ny 48%; F 40, R 39, M 1)

Sofala (Dh 56%, Ny 35%; R 45, F 30, M 7)

Closely follows municipal model

The bill closely follows the proposal of the recently assassinated constitutional lawyer Gilles Cistac.

It calls for the creation of "autarquias provincias." In Portuguese, an "autarquia" is an autonomous administrative body, such as an elected municipal administration. Thus the bill closely follows existing law creating the elected municipalities, to ensure it would be constitutional.

As with the municipalities, responsibility for local roads, primary education and primary health care is transferred to the new elected bodies. Under the land law, land concessions of up to 1000 hectares can be made by the governor, and this would be transferred to the assembly and council president.

The draft law does propose two changes which would be controversial. The President of Mozambique nominates district administrators and the governor names heads of administrative posts and localities, and this would be transferred to the new "council president". And provinces would be given half of all taxes paid to the state from minerals, gas and oil extracted from within the province.

The province would be allowed to take out loans under limited circumstances and impose its own taxes.

The bill also calls for an advisory provincial social and economic council, with 10 traditional leaders, 10 business people, 4 people from higher education, 2 from technical education, 2 from primary education and 11 from provincial associations. The people would be elected by the constituency they represented, but the bill does not say how this would be done.

Comment

How much decentralisation?

Frelimo has always been divided on decentralisation and the balance between decentralisation of power and what it calls "deconcentration" where decision-making power is held centrally but local administrations have more freedom about how they carry out those central decisions and instructions.

Thus the number of municipalities had been expanded from 33 in 1998 to 53 now and with experience they have gained more confidence and power. Frelimo controls most of the municipalities, but central government has also tried to monitor more closely the actions of those who are elected. As well as an elected mayor, Maputo city now also has a nominated governor which it never had before. And most other municipalities now have nominated district administrators as well as elected mayors. Although the state retains functions within the municipalities, such as for health and education, these are mainly people named by Frelimo to maintain a check on its own elected officials. And in some areas, the size of Frelimo controlled municipalities had been reduced, with some neighbourhoods transferred to neighbouring districts.

President Filipe Nyusi has promised Dhlakama that Frelimo in parliament will take the proposal seriously, and any serious debate will need to be about the merits of further decentralisation.

All democratic countries face the problem of lower level elected bodies being controlled by parties which are in opposition in the national parliament, and the responses are very varied. There is a conflict between the Frelimo central government and MDM administrations in key cities. If this bill were approved, Renamo would dominate three and perhaps five provincial governments.

The Frelimo Political Commission sent teams throughout the country to argue that further decentralisation would divide the country and destroy national unity. And Dhlakama's rhetoric over the past weeks has very much been about dividing the country.

Nyusi has promised that Frelimo will not simply reject the bill, but will consider it seriously. If that happens, it could lead to a very interesting discussion on decentralisation and how to balance

national unity with more autonomy at provincial level. *jh*

Dhlakama demands approval

The agreement last month between Nyusi and Dhlakama made clear that this was not the same as the election law changes last year, where Frelimo agreed to accept anything that Renamo proposed. Instead, both sides made clear that the only agreement was that the proposal would not be dismissed out of hand (as the Frelimo parliamentary majority often does with Renamo proposals) and would be debated seriously.

But Dhlakama has dropped back to demand that his proposal simply be adopted. "Don't worry, it's already been decided", he told a rally Chimoio last weekend. "We shall govern here in Manica, and in Sofala, Zambézia, Tete, Nampula and Niassa. Don't worry. If Frelimo tries to play around, we shall govern by force, because we have the capacity, we have the support of the people. It's Frelimo who needs us, Renamo doesn't need Frelimo".

In a series of rallies, Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama has stressed that he sees that concept of "autonomous provinces" as a way of gaining power in some provinces. STV showed Dhlakama at a rally in Angonia, Tete, saying: "that I'm here to tell you that, despite everything Frelimo has stolen, we shall govern" and that Frelimo would "never again" govern in Tete.

Meanwhile, Frelimo has accused Renamo of violating the ceasefire by setting up new military bases in Mabote and Funhalouro districts, Inhambane, and Chibuto district, Gaza, in February.

So far, no Renamo men have been demobilised and the demobilisation monitoring group is being run down. The United States never sent its soldiers, and those from Botswana (head of the mission), Italy, Britain and Portugal are going home. South Africa, Zimbabwe (new mission head), Kenya, and Cape Verde are keeping troops in Mozambique as part of the mission, known as EMOCHM.

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Joseph Hanlon

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Mozambique media websites:

Noticias: www.jornalnoticias.co.mz

O Pais: www.opais.co.mz

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

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

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