

DAILY NATION

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To let Machel go would be tragic

The latest reports from Maputo suggest that the bloody war of attrition between President Samora Machel's Frelimo Government and the right-wing guerrilla Mozambique Resistance Movement (MNR), led by Alfonso Dhlakama, may have hit the home stretch.

And the gleeful hoots emanating from the guerrillas' camps imply that the MNR is about to emerge as the victor in this 11-year-old civil conflict that rates as one of Africa's bloodiest and most protracted, though least publicised. It has occasioned astronomical losses in human and financial terms in an already poverty-stricken country.

No upholder of the tenets of human rights and freedom can applaud the latest turn of events in that war-scarred country. This is especially true since it is common knowledge that the war is not in the interests of the citizens of Mozambique, irrespective of what the guerrillas may say they are fighting for.

The war is a strand in the convoluted vortex of interests at play in the Southern part of Africa. More precisely, it is being fed by the besieged racist regime in Pretoria seeking a strategic base from which to intensify its obnoxious acts of destabilisation against its neighbours.

Mozambique, through its crucial "Beira corridor", offers Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana alternative foreign trade routes. This could effectively sever the deadly stranglehold the racists have over these three Frontline states. The Boers will, therefore, do all in their power to topple the popularly mandated regime of Mr Machel and, in his place, put a puppet answerable to Pretoria and — via remote control — to Washington.

The MNR has no political ideology whatever and its argument that it seeks to reinstitute tribal chiefs in place of the current political commissars graphically serves to illustrate its reactionary vision.

This notwithstanding, the MNR has amply proved that it is a highly resilient guerrilla organisation that can match Mr Machel's forces. The MNR has done it before and its successes have led it to believe that one more offensive is all that it requires to subdue Frelimo.

The question is: Should this be allowed to happen? Are African states going to allow President Machel to fall and, with him, all the successes that have recently been scored against the racists?

It is a strangely unique African phenomenon that while all efforts are directed in a given direction, others are actively engaged in sabotaging these efforts. Malawi has cast its lot with the racists and wants to see the latter's hegemony in the Southern Africa region.

But Zimbabwe has not. Its oral condemnation of the South African regime in international forums is manifested by physical combat at home. Apart from having to repulse attacks on its territory, it now has 12,000 troops in active engagement against the MNR inside Mozambique.

It is this truly heroic deed that we applaud, and we exhort all other countries to emulate it. To sit on the fence and later condemn developments in that part of the continent is like watching an errant boy break the egg and moan later when he starts killing the chicks.

It has been said before and we say it again. The situations in Southern Africa, of which the Mozambican dilemma is a factor, cannot just be wished away. It has to be fought off. So the current cowardly lethargy has to be cast off to prevent Mr Machel's downfall. For if he goes the hand of time in South Africa will have been turned back full circle.