

Peace talks open with the MNR

Church leaders were having talks in Nairobi with rebels of the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR), President Chissano announced on 17 July. The church leaders were acting with the approval of the government, he said in Maputo.

The MNR's Lisbon representative Manuel Frank said the rebels were not yet ready to hold direct talks with the government, but were keen to study Chissano's 12-point peace plan, which calls for the MNR to renounce violence. "We are very interested in coming to a solution," Frank told Reuters.

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For the MNR team, which had been in Nairobi for more than a week, it was the third meeting with church leaders in recent months. Frank denied reports that the rebel delegation would be led by MNR chief Afonso Dhlakama, saying new foreign affairs secretary Raul Domingos would lead the team. The MNR is insisting on a ceasefire, followed by the installation of a transitional government, the introduction of a new constitution and general elections, he added.

Chissano said a government delegation was also in Nairobi. It would not take part in any dialogue with the rebels, but would be available to "give clarification" to the church leaders and the Kenyan government. Kenya's President Moi, who is mediating between the two sides, is expected to visit Maputo in the week ending 26 July, to work out the next steps.

The president did not identify the religious leaders, but they are believed to include Cardinal Dos Santos, the Catholic archbishop of Maputo.