

floggings

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From Joseph Hanlon
in Maputo

Justification for reintroducing draconian colonial-style punishments, including public flogging and an increase in capital offences, has come from President Machel.

He said that there was "complacency and passivity among the people" in the face of anti-Government rebels and black marketeers. "The penalties we apply have no impact on the people. The old chiefs had their laws and punished severely crimes in their areas. For this reason, there was no anarchy."

Mr Machel stressed that the people themselves were demanding more severe penal-

ties. The Justice Minister, Mr Teodato Hinguana, told Parliament that with the defeat of colonialism, Frelimo threw out colonial corporal punishment. But "we were left with empty hands and no ways to deal with criminals." What was odious, he stressed, was not the punishments themselves, but that they were "instruments of colonial repression."

The new policy is part of a sharp shift away from Frelimo's previous stress on clemency and "re-education." There was no death penalty until 1979.

Mr Hinguana noted that the reintroduction of the death penalty had caused international protest, and he added: "It is certain that the

introduction of the present changes will bring stronger protest." But he told Parliament: "Before you talk of individual rights and dignity, you must first have the rights and dignity of the people."

The Justice Minister also stressed that the new laws would take effect immediately. Eleven men sentenced by a military tribunal last Saturday are to be given public floggings under the law, which was introduced in the middle of their trial.

The same tribunal sentenced to death a prawn smuggler. He was arrested last year but the law applying the death penalty to economic sabotage was passed only this March.