

All Because of Evo Fernandes...

The Portuguese authorities ordered the Third Secretary at the Mozambican Embassy in Lisbon, Rafael Custodio Marques, to leave the country on 27 March. The Portuguese government declared Mr Marques "persona non grata" and gave him 72 hours to leave.

This was the response of the Portuguese government to Mozambique's refusal to lift Mr Marques' diplomatic immunity. Portuguese citizens Alexandre Chagas and Joaquim Messias, the two men accused of murdering Evo Fernandes in April 1988, are alleged to have implicated Mr Marques in the crime.

Fernandes, the former general secretary of the South African backed MNR bandits, was a Portuguese citizen and head of an MNR research department at the time of his death. He had been removed from the post of general secretary in a power struggle in 1986, but still wielded a great deal of influence in the MNR.

The Portuguese government on 14 March asked the Mozambican government to lift Mr Marques' diplomatic immunity, saying it thereby intended "to create the desirable conditions for the full examination of the facts in court".

When the Mozambican government rejected this request, the Portuguese government stated it had no alternative but to declare Mr Marques "persona non grata" under article 9/1 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

The Mozambican foreign ministry insisted that neither the Mozambican state, nor any of its officials had anything to do with the death of Fernandes. It has always maintained that it played no part in the assassination. "These are not the methods used by Frelimo," Foreign Minister Pascoal Mocumbi declared in April 1988, shortly after Fernandes' body had been found.

On 18 March, Mozambique declared the commercial consul at the Portuguese embassy in Maputo, Jose Marcelino da Silva Pereira, to be a "persona non grata" and ordered him to leave the country. Mr Pereira was accused of "activities incompatible with his diplomatic status".

Portuguese Prime Minister Anibal Cavaco Silva reacted to the expulsion on Portuguese television, claiming that the measure "has no justification", but stressing that "Portugal intends to remain calm in dealing with this case". He said the Portuguese government did not want the issue to negatively affect relations between the two countries.

Talking to journalists on his return to Maputo on 18 March, Rafael Custodio Marques said he considered his expulsion order "a mistake". He denied the accusations made against him and said speculation about his involvement in the murder of Fernandes was the work of those who wanted to damage relations between Mozambique and Portugal.

He said the Mozambican embassy in Lisbon had received anonymous death threats over the telephone, and that the security forces guarding the building where the embassy is housed had been withdrawn.

On 20 March, Foreign Minister Pascoal Mocumbi told reporters that "We did not waive the diplomatic immunity because neither the government, nor the Mozambican state were involved" in the killing.

Asked if the incident might affect Prime Minister Anibal Cavaco Silva's plan to visit Mozambique this year, Dr Mocumbi replied, "You should ask the Portuguese. This is entirely up to the Portuguese side." He added that "Mozambique is preparing the Prime Minister's visit just as has been agreed up to now."



Rafael Custodio Marques in Maputo (AIM/ Joel Chiziane)

Blaming the Victim

Accusations of Mozambican involvement in the murder last year of bandit leader Evo Fernandes are reaching the level of hysteria in Lisbon, accused the Maputo daily paper *Noticias* in a front-page editorial on 17 March.

The editorial noted that cries are being heard "for the recall of the Portuguese ambassador from Maputo, or for the cancellation of the planned visit of Prime Minister Cavaco Silva

to our country, or for the suspension of cooperation, or even for completely cutting relations with Mozambique. And all because of Evo Fernandes."

The paper said that the "sinister name" of Fernandes "is directly linked to the deaths of more than 600,000 Mozambican victims of the terrorism" to which the MNR "dedicated itself".

"The importance given today in Lisbon to the death of Evo Fernandes, who was not merely a terrorist, but a terrorist leader, contrasts sharply with the indifference and complacency shown towards the thousands of victims of his crimes," added the editorial.

It notes that there is nothing new in "the tactic of trying to blame the victim for the crime".