

Religious Leaders Meet with the MNR

The long planned-for meeting between Mozambican religious leaders and a delegation from South Africa's MNR bandits began on 8 August in Nairobi, under the auspices of the Kenyan government. It lasted until 13 August.

The meeting followed talks a day earlier between Kenyan and Zimbabwean Presidents Daniel Arap Moi and Robert Mugabe. According to the communique issued by Kenya at the end of this meeting, "the two presidents reviewed and endorsed the guidelines for the meeting between Renamo and the church delegation" and called on "all those interested in assisting the peace process to lend their support to this initiative".

These principles, made public by Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano on 17 July (see full text in August issue of *Mozambiquefile*), call for an end to "all acts of terrorism and banditry", and stress that the war is "a destabilisation operation that should not be confused with a conflict between two political parties". They say that, with the normalisation of life, all citizens, including "those who up to now have been involved in violent acts of destabilisation" can play a full part in the political and social life of the country. They declare that no group has the right "to use intimidation or violence to impose its will upon society as a whole".

Still difficulties to be overcome, says Cardinal dos Santos

Cardinal Alexandre dos Santos, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Maputo, leader of the church delegation, who returned to Mozambique before the meeting had ended, described what had taken place so far. He told AIM on 12 August that the MNR leaders had said they wanted peace, but that there were still difficulties to be overcome.

Cardinal dos Santos said that the MNR delegation consisted of six people, led by their top military commander, Afonso Dhikama. All six had come from Mozambique to Nairobi via Malawi.

The other three churchmen present were the Catholic archbishop of Beira, Jaime Goncalves, the Anglican bishop of the Libombos, Dinis Sengulane, and the chairman of the Mozambique Christian Council, the umbrella body of 17 Protestant churches, Pastor Osias Mucache.

The cardinal was reluctant to give details of the discussions, but he described the atmosphere at the meeting as "open and frank".

"Everybody wants peace," he said, but added, "the path to peace is naturally long. Problems are not resolved from one day to the next."

"The MNR says it wants peace, and will work for peace", he continued. "So does the Mozambican government. But there will be difficulties in reaching agreement on several points."

On 15 August, the church leaders met with President Chissano to brief him on the meeting, but no details were made public.

MNR document "meaningless", Chissano tells journalists

A 16-point document produced by the MNR at the end of their talks with the churchmen tries to establish the MNR as a legitimate political organisation, describing itself as "an active and political force in the Mozambican political scene". It claims that "it is not Renamo's intention to change the existing order in Mozambique through armed struggle" and



Chissano being interviewed on airplane, returning from Harare on 25 August (AIM/Joel Chiziane)

that Renamo "would never agree to military force being used to impose a leadership or political options against the will of the people".

The document shows the MNR to be offended by its reputation as terrorists and urges an "end to the insulting verbal attacks by both those who are fighting us and those on the outside who are directly or indirectly interested in the problem". It adds that "propaganda against Renamo will not change the political-military reality in Mozambique nor facilitate national reconciliation".

It denies the well-documented massacres, mutilations and other atrocities committed by the bandits and demands the withdrawal of "the foreign forces brought in by Frelimo", though it fails to mention the MNR's own origins as a creature of first the

Rhodesian and then the South African secret services.

It claims to be a guerrilla force "whose existence depends solely on the people; therefore it is naturally against any atrocity that puts the people's life at risk".

Speaking to Mozambican journalists on 25 August, President Chissano dismissed the 16-point document as "meaningless". The bandit's document, Mr Chissano said, merely showed that "there is still a great lack of understanding" among the bandit leaders.

On 29 August, the church leaders were in Nairobi for a further round of talks with the leaders of the MNR. Archbishop Goncalves of Beira told the Beira daily *Diário de Moçambique* before leaving that they did not know when the MNR delegation would arrive. The churchmen might have to wait two days or more for the MNR to show up, he said.

In fact, the meeting lasted for no more than two days, and the churchmen were back in Mozambique on 1 September.



Cardinal Alexandre dos Santos speaking to reporters in Maputo (AIM/Joel Chizlane)

Church Began Dialogue, Archbishop Claims

In an interview with the Beira newspaper, *Diário de Moçambique*, Roman Catholic archbishop of Beira Jaime Goncalves said the meetings started "at the initiative of the church, because we wanted to see if an end could be put to the armed conflict. We had not been asked by the government to do this, but we contacted various people who could help us in this mission."

He said that the fact of the initiatives was communicated to the Mozambican authorities,

and that later the churchmen became couriers carrying messages and ideas from the government to the MNR and vice versa.

"In this first phase, we dealt with everything orally," he said. "Only later did we reach a phase of written documents."

The move to written documents was important, Archbishop Goncalves said, because "the ideas have moved into the public domain".

He noted that the MNR had produced its own document,

but declined to describe this as a reply to the government's principles

The archbishop thought it important for "each one to express what they think about the normalisation of the country's life. Each one has some ideas on the process. We of the churches involved have something of a role of facilitating dialogue for peace in the country."

He added that "we can be useful for both sides".