

Chissano makes concession to MNR

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Members of the rebel Mozambique National Resistance (MNR) will be allowed to stand for parliament in the 1991 elections if they renounce violence and lay down arms, President Chissano said in Maputo on 15 October. The MNR, which is talking indirectly with the government through Church leaders, spurned Chissano's previous demand to end "banditry and terrorism" and start direct talks (AED 1:9:89; 4:9:89; 28:8:89).

The semi-official daily Noticias, reporting Chissano's latest concession, quotes him as saying: "Even those who have been involved in armed banditry can be elected to people's assemblies at all levels as long as they are repentant and are interested in serving the people."

New efforts to end the 14-year civil war began in Nairobi on 16 October, with MNR leader Afonso Dhlakama due to meet Foreign Ministry officials from Kenya and Zimbabwe, Bethuell Abdu Kiplagat and Alec Matsangaidze respectively. Both countries have been asked to mediate in the dispute (AED 7:8:89).

They are expected to put forward Maputo's stipulation that negotiations can begin only when the MNR recognises the Frelimo government and the case for constitutional change through the one-party system.

Meanwhile, the MNR has invited the ruling Frelimo party to set up a joint commission to investigate civil war atrocities.

The MNR said in September that it would guarantee "full access to all its areas at all times" and that it hoped Frelimo would "do the same." The MNR said the commission should include representatives of Churches and international organisations.

Diplomatic sources said the proposal appeared to be an indirect reply to government demands that the rebels lay down their arms as a prelude to full peace talks.