

Chissano confirms Dhlakama was allowed to leave H 26/11/89

CHIMOIO.

MOZAMBICAN President Joaquim Chissano on Saturday confirmed that the Mozambican armed forces had allowed MNR bandit commander Afonso Dhlakama to leave the country in August so that he could meet Mozambican religious leaders in Nairobi and receive from them the government's principles on which dialogue could be based.

Speaking at a rally in the central city of Chimoi, President Chissano said that initially Dhlakama had not wanted to attend the Nairobi meeting. He had placed as a condition that the Mozambican government recognise his group as a political party.

According to the president, Dhlakama rejected the proposal of a meeting with the churchmen, and demanded instead a meeting with government representatives. Had this taken place, it would have been a tacit recognition of the MNR.

The government rejected Dhlakama's demand, replying that any dialogue should merely serve "to find ways of ending the war".

In March the government produced a 12-point set of principles on which a dialogue could be started. These principles,

made public in July, were formally delivered to the MNR leadership by the church leaders in August.

Cde Chissano told the crowd that the bandit chiefs had rejected the principles and promised to continue the war. He said they had also refused to recognise the constitution and himself as president.

He added that he had invited Dhlakama to come and speak to the people and place before them his proposal to have the MNR recognised as a political party. Dhlakama had turned down the invitation.

President Chissano told the crowd that the struggle could not stop. As long as the MNR persisted in its campaign of murder and destruction, it would be necessary for the people to organise their own self-defence.

He said that although the armed forces had won significant successes in the military offensive against the bandits in the centre of the country, recapturing most of the small towns that the bandits had held, a lot of effort was still required before life could return fully to normality in the war-affected areas. — Ziana-AIM.