

# Chissano seeks Christmas peace in Mozambique

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PEMBA (Mozambique). — President Joaquim Chissano wants a ceasefire by Christmas in the nation's crippling civil war, says the Aim news agency.

In comments in the northern town of Pemba, Mr Chissano said his ruling Frelimo party wanted to stop the fighting immediately, but that the rebels insisted on negotiating political issues such as elections and forming a unified army.

A series of peace talks that began last year in Rome have yielded a partial ceasefire and agreement on guidelines for political parties in Mozambique, a formerly Marxist one-party state.

Mr Chissano expressed satisfaction with recent conciliatory statements by Afonso Dhlakama, leader of the Renamo rebels, but said he doubted that a ceasefire could be reached by Christmas, Aim reported.

The next round of talks are

scheduled for December 10.

"I don't know whether Dhlakama will have such an open spirit as to enable us to sign all the documents required within a space of 10 days," Aim quoted Mr Chissano as saying.

"If this were to happen I would be very pleased."

More than 600 000 people have died in the 14-year civil war and more than a million have become refugees. About half the 15 million population requires donated food.

Mr Chissano's party has governed Mozambique since it gained independence from Portugal in 1975. It dropped its Marxist label and last year adopted a new constitution calling for multiple political parties and free elections.

The rebels rejected the new constitution, saying Frelimo drafted it without consulting them and the peace talks now involve constitutional issues as well as how to implement a ceasefire. — Sapa-AP.