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Renamo candidate in election quandary

MAPUTO — Afonso Dhlakama, a former rebel leader and candidate in Mozambique's first post-war presidential election in October, had still not collected the 10 000 signatures required to back his candidacy, electoral officials said yesterday.

The UN-backed elections are the first to be organised in the southern African country since the current government and rebels signed a peace treaty in Rome in October 1992, ending a 17-year civil war which started after independence from Portugal in 1975.

However, with four days to go before all the presidential lists have to be filed, Dhlakama, leader of the former South African-backed Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo), needed 115 signatures to complete the minimum requirement of 10 000, said a spokesman for the National Elections Commission.

"Some of Dhlakama's supporting signatures were invalid because the same people signed up for other candidates," he said.

By contrast, Joaquim Chissano, Mozambique's current president and the presidential candidate of the ruling Frelimo party, had already presented 20 000 signatures and had all his documents in order, the spokesman said.

Among the other parties, Domingos Arouca, leader of the non-armed opposition party United Front of Mozambique (Fumo), has more than 12 000 names on his list.

Padimbe Kamati, leader of the minor PPPM opposition party, who had claimed he would clinch victory in the election with 85% of the vote, had only a fistful of valid signatures by last night.

And the leader of the "offbeat" religious-based PPLM, Neves Serrano, needed approximately 9 000 more valid signatures.

The spokesman said the two major parties contending the elections, Frelimo and Renamo, had all their documents in order for the candidates in the parliamentary election to be held at the same time.

So too did Fumo, the National Coalition Party (PCN) and the Workers' Party (PT).

Frelimo's list of parliamentary candidates is dominated by present-day ministers and other leading government members.

Some Frelimo members have expressed disappointment that the party in power since 1975 is fielding the same names and is showing no apparent intention of changing its approach after the ending of the war. — Sapa-AFP.