

MOZAMBIQUE: Debate on new Constitution tense

In an interview published by Portuguese newspaper, *Expresso*, on April 7, but which took place a few days earlier, President **Joaquim Chissano** admitted the possibility that **Afonso Dhlakama**, leader of the rebel force, RENAMO, "may stand as candidate in the presidential elections in 1991." He also said that he would like "more than one candidate and one opinion," to stand. Considering that a multi-party system is an option "opened" by the Constitution Bill drawn up in January and, under public debate from April 2 to the end of May, the President said that, "I raised a question and I am waiting for an answer, which I shall make law, even if it does not correspond with my own opinion."

Mozambicans in several districts of Maputo have already responded. During the first of the public debates in Maxaquene and Polana-Canico, the authorities were subjected to an avalanche of accusations related to corruption and their incapacity to restore peace to the country. In most other places where the debates are scheduled to be held, *FRELIMO* brigades who are there to organise them, arrive to find hardly anybody there.

In Polana-Canico, people refused to debate the Constitution preferring to talk about the civil war and rising prices. "The very people who are killing us, are asking us for our suggestions," said one man whose comments were met with wild applause. He refuted the fact that the government was a "Peoples" government, saying that it was incapable of solving the country's problems, alluding to the Vth *FRELIMO* Congress when the people had also been asked to give their opinion, but that these were then ignored.

I.O.N.- The failure of this debate action brought the Minister of Information secretly to censor information on the attendance of these meetings broadcast on national radio and published in the daily newspaper, *Noticias*. Journalists who had been invited to follow discussions at the Ministries of Defence and of the Interior, were prohibited from reporting anything on the debates. All national organisations, including the Churches, which were asked by the government to take part in the discussion on the bill for a new Constitution, refused to make any comments. And on Sunday, April 8, the Catholic Church organised a demonstration for peace in Maputo.