

Bid to prevent Lisbon healing Mozambique rift on Fernandes killing

HARARE/ As Portugal and Mozambique try hard to repair the damage from the reciprocal diplomatic expulsions in March (*SouthScan* 12 April), the right-wing press in Lisbon is attempting to revive the question of alleged Mozambican involvement in the murder of ex-Mozambique National Resistance secretary-general Evo Fernandes in April last year, writes a correspondent here.

At the end of a three-day visit to Mozambique, termed by the Portuguese "essentially political," Jose Manuel Durao Barroso, the Portuguese Foreign Secretary, who is number two in the foreign ministry, and who also has responsibility for the cooperation portfolio, said at Maputo airport on 30 May that his government considers the Evo Fernandes case to be "closed, from the diplomatic point of view."

Durao Barroso's visit was described by Mozambican officials as "a very important step in the establishment of closer relations between the two countries."

As a goodwill gesture, Mozambique freed a Portuguese citizen, Orlando Teixeira, who had been imprisoned on security-related charges.

While the Foreign Secretary was in Mozambique, the Lisbon fortnightly *Informafrica* (until recently known as *Africa Confidential*, not to be confused with the British publication of a similar name) carried a full-page story on 27 May alleging that documentary proof had emerged of links between the Mozambique security service SNASP and Alexandre Chagas, the main accused in the Fernandes case.

The story claimed that two letters allegedly written by Chagas to the Ministry of Security in Maputo were in the possession of the magazine. The letters, claims *Informafrica*, show that Chagas was friendly with senior Mozambican security officials, and that the murder was organized by SNASP.

Chagas recently withdrew in court his earlier statements confirming Mozambican involvement (*SouthScan* 26 April), saying they were made under pressure from the Portuguese police.

But *Informafrica* claims that his real reason for denying the statements, is because, it alleges, his daughter is being held in a 'safe house' in Maputo, where Paulo Oliveira is also living. The newsletter describes this situation as "an element of pressure and blackmail."

It is clear nonetheless that the conservative Portuguese government of Prime Minister Cavaco Silva has decided to drop the issue, after the diplomatic gestures of March, for political and economic reasons.

On the postponed visit by the Portuguese Prime Minister, Durao Barroso conceded that his visit might lead to a re-evaluation.

The Secretary was accompanied on his trip to Mozambique, which included a stop-over in Zimbabwe, by a high-powered delegation which included senior officials from his own ministry as well as Lopes da Costa, director of ICEP, Portugal's foreign trade institute.

Topics under discussion between the two governments included the Cahora Bassa hydro-electric scheme, which costs Portugal about Esc700bn (US\$4.6 bn) a year while it is not working.

Durao Barroso would not comment on Portuguese intentions concerning Cahora Bassa.

He also confirmed the possibility of Portuguese involvement in any peace negotiations between the Mozambique national Resistance (MNR Renamo) and the Mozambican government, saying he would not exclude "in theory, any hypothesis." Later, after his meeting in Harare with Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe, he was more forthcoming, claiming that Portugal was "persuading and using some of our pressure to have those involved in the fighting in Mozambique come to peace."

Durao Barroso went on to visit South Africa last week and was scheduled in Namibia this week.