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Unidentified gunmen attack the convoy of opposition Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Renamo) leader Afonso Dhlakama. The international community expresses willingness to help resolve the political crisis between Renamo and the ruling Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Frelimo). Security forces briefly detain Dhlakama. The Conselho de Ministros (CdM) (council of ministers/cabinet) approves new freedom of information regulations. Standard Bank Mozambique predicts a slow down in economic growth and higher inflation. Unknown assailants kidnap two businessmen in Maputo.

Unidentified gunmen attack Dhlakama's convoy for the second time

Unidentified gunmen attacked the convoy of opposition **Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Renamo)** leader **Afonso Dhlakama** on 25 September.¹ This was the second attack on Dhlakama's convoy in September (see *ARC Briefing Mozambique September 2015*) and will further delay a final political settlement between Renamo and the government. The reason for the second attack is not clear. The attack took place on national highway **EN6** while Dhlakama was travelling between **Chimoio (Manica Province)** and **Nampula (Nampula Province)**. The incident occurred in **Macadeira**, in the **Amatongas** administrative area (**Gondola District**).² Nine vehicles were caught in the crossfire between the attackers and Dhlakama's security, but Dhlakama escaped unharmed.

The ambush killed 16 Renamo fighters and several civilians on a minibus caught in the crossfire.³ There are contradicting accounts of the number of deaths. The government puts the death toll at 23, while the army says 25.⁴ There are also differing accounts of what actually took place. Police commander **Armando Mude** said,

"According to our reports, it seems the minibus came too close to Renamo's convoy, who thought it was attacking, so they opened fire ... When police arrived on the scene a gunfight erupted."⁵

A political analyst said

"... the gunmen in plain clothes are believed to be government forces as they were using heavy weapons and a car. A local resident says the men appeared a day before the attack asking questions about Renamo and then they carried their equipment and positioned themselves in the hillside."⁶

Manica police commander **Armando Canhenze** said,

"The most probable assumption is that crossfire took place among the Renamo military themselves in the wake of the first shot being fired by a man who was behind the convoy ... the first shot scared the others, creating panic within the group ... a normal situation in large and disorderly teams, then an accident occurred between a Renamo car and a truck, with the convoy

¹ Domingo, 28 Sept 2015.

² Domingo, 28 Sept 2015.

³ Domingo, 28 Sept 2015.

⁴ Source, political analyst, Maputo

⁵ AFP, 28 Sept 2015.

⁶ Source, political analyst, Maputo

already in disarray and on the run ... no one knew where the shots were coming from and everybody began to shoot in every direction.”⁷

A day after the alleged attack, Renamo spokesman **Antonio Muchanga** told the media that gunmen ambushed Dhlakama’s convoy and said that Renamo gunmen had killed many attackers who were wearing civilian clothing. After the attack he confirmed Dhlakama was safe and unharmed.

“... Dhlakama is safe and sound and morally very concerned with the path our detractors chose to follow.”⁸

Muchanga alleged that the ruling **Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Frelimo)** party was behind the ambush.⁹ Canhenze denied that Mozambique’s **Forças Armadas de Defesa de Moçambique (FADM)** (armed forces) and **Polícia da República de Moçambique (PRM)** (national police), perpetrated the attack.

“Our men do not do that. If someone is a police officer, he is dressed in proper uniform; in the case of a military, it is the same. Even private security guards are required to wear uniforms. It is ridiculous, the idea of us placing gunmen in plain clothes in a certain spot.”¹⁰

International community offers to help resolve political crisis after attack

Progress towards a lasting political solution between the Frelimo government and the opposition Renamo has remained slow.

“Too little progress has been made aiming to end the long-lasting Mozambique political crisis and the solution is still uncertain in the near future. In September, Dhlakama’s convoy suffered two ambushes and there have been two military confrontations between the government forces and Renamo gunmen. The worst incident occurred on 25 September [see above]...”¹¹

The **United States (US)** ambassador to Mozambique, **Douglas Griffiths**, said on 4 October that the international community is willing to help resolve the political crisis that has escalated in recent weeks after the two attacks on Dhlakama.¹² On the sidelines of a ceremony marking the 23rd anniversary of the **Rome** peace agreement, which ended Mozambique’s long running civil war, Griffiths said,

“The situation is worrying. In any country, when a member of the opposition is involved in attacks, it is always worrying. The international community is ready to help ...Dialogue is the only way to solve the problem, you cannot use violence ...In any situation, people sometimes ask friends for help.”¹³

Sven von Burgsdorff, head of the **European Union (EU)** mission in Mozambique, reiterated that the recent incidents involving Dhlakama’s convoy were concerning and required investigation and clarification to ensure peace and stability in Mozambique.¹⁴ He also reiterated the EU’s support for dialogue,

“It is necessary that the government and the main opposition party find mechanisms to restore confidence, an indispensable element in the dialogue process...We [the EU] are ready to give our support, as we always have been, but the solution is endogenous and can only be found in Mozambicans themselves.”¹⁵

⁷ Lusa, 29 Sept 2015.

⁸ AFP, 28 Sept 2015.

⁹ AFP, 28 Sept 2015.

¹⁰ Lusa, 29 Sept 2015.

¹¹ Source, political analyst, Maputo

¹² www.clubofmozambique.com

¹³ www.clubofmozambique.com

¹⁴ www.clubofmozambique.com

¹⁵ www.clubofmozambique.com

Dhlakama released after police detain him at his home

After the second attack on his convoy (see above) Dhlakama went into hiding in an unknown location in **Manica** or **Sofala Provinces** and only returned, via **Gorongosa District** (Sofala Province) on 8 October.¹⁶

*“However, against all expectations, the next morning, the riot police and the police special brigade carrying heavy weapons invaded Dhlakama's house in the neighbourhood of **Palmeiras [in Beira]**. Dhlakama's neighbours were told to leave and 8 to 11 Renamo men were taken. The team of national mediators, most of them already on their way back to **Maputo**, were called back and extensive negotiations took place [throughout] the day and by mid afternoon an agreement was reached, and weapons were handed over by Renamo. The police left the place and the Renamo men were released by midnight.”¹⁷*

After his release Dhlakama said,

“I do not deserve this type of treatment. This is the price I am paying for trying to free my people. History will tell...”¹⁸

Neither the government nor the security forces gave a reason for Dhlakama's detention.¹⁹ Frelimo said on its **Facebook** page that police were protecting Dhlakama and that his guards were disarmed for his own safety.²⁰ **Daviz Simango**, leader of the opposition **Movimento Democrático de Moçambique (MDM)**, said Dhlakama's detention was “... not protection [but] house arrest ...”.²¹

The continued tension between the ruling Frelimo government and Renamo will delay a final solution to the current political impasse.

*“These events worsened the people's expectations for peace and the uncertainty for the future. Many believe that President **Filipe Jacinto Nyusi** (2015 - present) is facing difficulties to act within his party, which is divided on whether the solution for the crisis is 'serious negotiations' with Renamo or the assassination of Dhlakama. The assassination of Dhlakama will not be the solution of this political tension, as it seems uncertain how many weapons are in the hands of Renamo or the exact number of the Renamo military wing supporters. Other analyst says the disarmament of Renamo is a way to keep control over Dhlakama, so that his position can be weakened in the negotiation table ... but Renamo says this shows that the Mozambican government cannot be trusted. The police, however, admit that it did not possess a legal mandate for raiding Dhlakama's house, but it explains that the intention was to protect him and avoid any harmful weapons that could undermine his security. Although Dhlakama and Nyusi have always admitted that a face-to-face meeting was being prepared, it is still unknown when it will take place and the recent events possibly worsen the trust between the parties.”²²*

The reversal of recent violent interactions with Renamo and the development of a climate of trust are needed before the government and Renamo can come to a final agreement.

Cabinet approves freedom of information regulations

The **Conselho de Ministros (CdM)** (council of ministers/cabinet) on 13 October approved a set of regulations that apply to the freedom of information law.²³ Although, parliament passed the new freedom of information laws over a year ago, application has remained difficult without a final set of regulations. The CdM approved regulations will allow for a more thorough application of the laws.

¹⁶ Source, political analyst, Maputo

¹⁷ Source, political analyst, Maputo

¹⁸ Reuters, 9 Oct 2015.

¹⁹ Reuters, 9 Oct 2015.

²⁰ Frelimo Facebook post, 9 Oct 2015.

²¹ www.bloomberg.com

²² Source, political analyst, Maputo

²³ AIM, 15 Oct 2015.

Government spokesperson and deputy health minister **Mouzinho Saide** said that the law and its regulations apply to all state bodies, to municipalities and to those private bodies which, under law or contract, undertake activities of public interest or benefit from public resources.²⁴ Saide said, “*the law states that all citizens have the right to consume public information*”.²⁵ The freedom of information law, gives the institutions a deadline of 21 days to provide the information that citizens request.²⁶ Individuals requesting access do not need to state what they intend to do with the information and may request the information verbally or in writing, and need do nothing more than identify him or herself.²⁷

“Information that is the subject of pending court cases, and is therefore sub judice, cannot be provided, and nor can state secrets. But state secrets must be defined as such by law, and officials cannot just decide off the top of their heads what constitutes a classified document.”²⁸

Standard Bank predicts a slow down in economic growth & higher inflation

Standard Bank Mozambique predicts that gross domestic product (GDP) growth will slow to 5.5% in 2016, and that inflation will come in above the government’s 5.6% forecast for 2016.²⁹

“The government recently released the drafts for the state budget and the economic and social plan for 2016, which will soon undergo parliamentary discussion, having projected a GDP growth of 7.8% which approximates our projections only in the least likely scenario, with the most likely scenario indicating a 5.5% growth.”³⁰

Standard Bank Mozambique said inflation will settle above the 5.6% projected for 2016 due to

“the fragility of the metical [national currency] and the need to increase some of the administered prices which have remained suppressed for a long period.”³¹

Due to the risk of higher inflation, the **Banco de Moçambique (BdM)** (central bank) monetary policy committee (MPC), which met on 14 October, decided to increase its benchmark lending rate from 7.5% to 7.75%.³² The MPC attributed its decision to the prevailing risks and the projections for inflation in 2016, which point to a higher level than the average for the last three years.³³ However, the decline in value of the metical, also weighed heavily in the BdM’s decision.³⁴

Unknown assailants kidnap two businessmen

Folha de Maputo reported on 13 October that unknown assailants kidnapped two businessmen in Maputo, indicating a resumption of kidnappings targeting **Asian** businessmen in the city (see previous ARC Mozambique briefings).³⁵ The first kidnapping victim was **Mohamade Basma**, a businessman of Asian origin who is reportedly the financial director of the **Unibasma Group**, a holding company linked to various businesses such as a mattress factory, a zinc plate factory, and appliances and tableware distribution.³⁶ The second victim was the owner of the **Miradouro Bottle Store**, located in Maputo’s upmarket **Polana** neighbourhood.³⁷ The recent kidnappings come after

²⁴ AIM, 15 Oct 2015.

²⁵ AIM, 15 Oct 2015.

²⁶ Saide quoted in AIM, 15 Oct 2015.

²⁷ AIM, 15 Oct 2015.

²⁸ AIM, 15 Oct 2015.

²⁹ Lusa, 6 Oct 2015.

³⁰ Lusa, 6 Oct 2015.

³¹ Lusa, 6 Oct 2015.

³² www.clubofmozambique.com

³³ www.clubofmozambique.com

³⁴ www.clubofmozambique.com

³⁵ Folha de Maputo, 13 Oct 2015.

³⁶ Folha de Maputo, 13 Oct 2015.

³⁷ Folha de Maputo, 13 Oct 2015.

unknown gunmen kidnapped another businessman of Asian origin on 24 September, who was later released after his family paid a ransom.³⁸

Implications

The second attack on Dhlakama's convoy in September will further delay a final political settlement between Renamo and the government despite reports that Nyusi and Dhlakama are willing to meet. The security forces' brief detention of Dhlakama has reduced the level of trust between Renamo and Frelimo and will further delay a final solution to the current impasse.

The new CdM's approved freedom of information regulations will allow for a more thorough application of the access to information laws and signals that the new government is committed to improving transparency.

The projected slowdown in GDP growth, which will negatively impact the government's tax revenue, is linked to the overall decline in global commodity prices.

Kidnap for ransom threats remain a concern particularly in Maputo and Matola (see previous ARC Mozambique briefings). Foreign investors and visitors alike are advised to take extra security precautions when travelling in the areas.

³⁸ Folha de Maputo, 13 Oct 2015.

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