Mozambique in 2013

The implication of having one of the world’s largest gas fields was dawning on local elites and everyone wanted a share. After 20 years of peace, Renamo launched new attacks on road traffic and the army. Doctors went on strike. The gas field was not yet producing, but $624 m in capital gains taxes transformed relations with donors. Meanwhile, governing party Frelimo’s main concerns were the succession and opposition successes in local elections.

Domestic Politics

Opposition party Renamo unexpectedly resumed military action, ending 20 years of peace. Renamo had signed a peace accord with the government in 1992 after a 15-year war and had stood in 1994 multi-party elections, becoming the main opposition party. But with the tacit acceptance of both the government and the international community, it retained small military bases and an armed militia called a “presidential guard”. Renamo had held up approval of electoral legislation, demanding the politicisation of the electoral administration and an effective veto over election decisions. When legislation was passed at the last minute, despite Renamo objections, Renamo’s leader, Alfonso Dhlakama, announced a boycott of elections, including not taking up Renamo posts on election commissions. Renamo Secretary-General Manuel Bissopo said on 29 March that Renamo was prepared to go to war to prevent registration and elections. In the early morning of 3 April, the riot police (Força de Intervenção Rápida) raided Renamo party headquarters in Muxungué, Sofala province, and Gondola, Manica province. There were hundreds of men in each
place, including some former guerrillas from the 1977–92 war. Renamo said that the gatherings were legal political meetings, just two of many being held by the party to mobilise against elections. The government called them military training camps. Two days later, Renamo guerrillas attacked a police post in Muxungué, killing four policemen, and the next days attacked traffic on the main north-south N1 road, killing three people.

* Talks between the government and Renamo * resumed on 2 May. The government delegation was headed by Agriculture Minister José Pacheco, a member of the Frelimo Political Commission. Renamo put four issues on the agenda: revision of the electoral law to give Renamo “parity”; reversal of the marginalisation of Renamo in the military; equitable distribution of wealth and greater participation by Renamo members in the economy; and reversal of the partyisation of the civil service. The second and third issues had long histories. When the peace accord was signed in 1992, Mozambique was a poor country with no mineral wealth; now with huge gas and coal reserves, there was much more money in circulation, and some elite Frelimo members had become relatively (and ostentatiously) wealthy. Frelimo membership seemed important for contracts, loans, promotions, etc., while known opposition members seemed to be excluded. Thus a key demand was for money, and for a higher status for Dhlakama and the Renamo military leadership. Speaking at a press conference on 10 April in Satunjira, Dhlakama said he had authorised the April attacks only because formers guerrillas said they would kill him if he did not. Local media unofficially confirmed this. Renamo generals felt they had not gained from 20 years of peace and wanted status and money.

* Violence * resumed on 24 May near Satunjira, when there was a shoot-out between the military and the Renamo presidential guard. On 17 June, Renamo attacked a military post and arms