

CHURCHMEN REPORT BACK ON NAIROBI MEETING

Leaders of the MNR bandits have told Mozambican churchmen that they want peace, but there remain difficulties to be overcome in the peace process, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Maputo, Cardinal Alexandre dos Santos told AIM the day after his return from Nairobi, on 11 August. There he had been one of four leading religious figures who held discussions with the MNR. The other three churchmen present were the Catholic Archbishop of Beira, Jaime Goncalves, the Anglican Bishop of the Libombos, Dinis Sengulane, and the Chairman of the Mozambique Christian Council, the umbrella body of 17 Protestant Churches, Pastor Jeremias Mucache.

Cardinal dos Santos said that the MNR delegation consisted of six people, led by their top military commander, Afonso Dhlakama. He said that all six had come from Mozambique to Nairobi via Malawi. The Cardinal said that the churchmen had given the MNR the set of 12 principles which the Mozambican Government has outlined as a basis for possible dialogue. But he pointed out that he left Nairobi ahead of the rest of the church delegation, and before the MNR had delivered a formal response to the principles.

The Cardinal was reluctant to give details of the discussions before he and the other churchmen had had an opportunity to report back to the government, but he described the atmosphere at the meeting as "open and frank".

He said that, at the recent Fifth Congress of the Frelimo Party, the Mozambican authorities "showed they were open to roads for peace, and we are now finding the same disposition from the MNR". He said "everybody wants peace" but added "the path to peace is naturally long. Problems are not resolved from one day to the next". The church leader continued "the MNR says it wants peace, and will work for peace, ...so does the Mozambican Government. But there will be difficulties in reaching an agreement on several points".

He said the religious delegation expected to meet with government representatives to present the MNR reply to the set of principles.

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