

MEETINGS TO RESUME IN NAIROBI

A group of Mozambican churchmen left Maputo on 28 August for a further round of talks in Nairobi with leaders of the South Africa backed MNR bandits. Among the churchmen are the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Maputo, Cardinal Alexandre dos Santos, and the chairman of the Mozambican Christian Council, Pastor Jeremias Mucache. They were joined by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Beira, Jaime Goncalves.

In an interview with the Beira Daily "Diario de Mocambique", before his departure, Archbishop Goncalves said he did not know when the MNR delegation would arrive in Nairobi. The churchmen might have to wait two days or more for the MNR to show up, he said. The Archbishop told the paper that these meetings started "at the initiative of the Church, because we wanted to see if an end could be put to the armed conflict. We had not been asked by the government to do this, but we contacted various people who could help us in this mission".

He said that the fact of the initiatives was communicated to the Mozambican authorities, and that later the churchmen became couriers carrying messages and ideas from the government to the MNR and vice versa. "In this first phase, we dealt with everything orally", he said. "Only later did we reach a phase of written documents". This included the set of principles outlined by the Mozambican government which the churchmen took to the bandits at a meeting earlier in August. The move to written documents was important, Archbishop Goncalves said, because "the ideas have moved into the public domain".

He noted that the MNR had now produced its own document but declined to describe this as a reply to the government's principles. The Archbishop thought it important that "each one express what they think about the normalisation or the country's life. Each one has some ideas on the process. We of the Churches involved have something of a role of facilitating dialogue for peace in the country". He added that "we can be useful for both sides". The Archbishop told the paper that the churchmen believed both the government and the MNR "are decided to end the war".

"Diario de Mocambique" pointed out, however, that despite the MNR's alleged desire for peace, bandit massacres were still taking place. The Archbishop replied "as for the violent destruction of lives - the Church has already condemned and does condemn this, and has spoken about it to both sides".

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