

MOZAMBICAN ELECTIONS RETURN INCUMBENT

By Doug Tilton

Mozambique had national elections on October 15th. It was the nation's sixth democratic poll since 1994, when Mozambique emerged from the fifteen-year civil war that followed independence. According to official results announced on October 27th, the incumbent president, Filipe Nyusi, was reelected with 73% of the vote. Nyusi's party, Frelimo, which has ruled Mozambique since independence, won 184 of the 250 seats in the country's National Assembly.

The main opposition candidate, Ossufo Momade, won 22% of the vote while his party, Renamo, secured 60 parliamentary seats. The MDM (Democratic Movement of Mozambique) won just six seats. Just over half of eligible voters—52 per cent—cast ballots.

Election observer Prof. Anne Pitcher [attributed](#) Frelimo's resounding victory to three main factors: the party's well-run campaign, divisions within Renamo, and electoral fraud. Frelimo's seasoned party activists effectively mobilized supporters in every province, ensuring that they turned out to vote. Renamo, by contrast, has been riven by factionalism since the death of its longtime leader, Afonso Dhlakama, in May 2018.

The vote was distorted by widespread electoral irregularities—inflated voter registration rolls, “ghost” voters (deceased people who still appear to have cast ballots), ballot box stuffing—

as well as by other dirty tricks—intimidation, fake news, and foreign interference.

Although observers from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) said that the run-up to the vote and the elections themselves were “generally peaceful and conducted in an orderly manner,” an observer mission from the European Union reported that the elections were conducted on “an unlevel playing field” amidst “a climate of fear”. At least ten people, including a prominent Mozambican election observer and a Renamo official, were killed in the days before the election.

While it seems unlikely that, in the absence of such abuses, the outcome would have been substantially different, these irregularities did tarnish the poll's credibility. Shortly after the official results were announced, Renamo filed a formal complaint asking that the election be annulled due to “massive electoral fraud.”

Observers fear that a contested result may trigger a resumption of armed conflict in Mozambique. Shortly before the election campaign, President Nyusi and Ossufo Momade signed a peace accord that ended several years of sporadic fighting between Renamo and government forces. If the agreement is abandoned, Mozambique's people may pay a heavy price.

Please continue to pray for peace and just governance in Mozambique.

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