

Mozambique Political Process Bulletin

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Analysis

Renamo protest: Irregularities do not account for 10% difference

Renamo has issued a protest against the results in Nacala and says it will not recognise the result. The protest contains five points, three of which do not seem to be supported. On two points, Renamo complaints are supported, but do not involve enough votes to account for the large difference between the two candidates, and thus are not enough to overturn the election.

In a protest submitted to the Nacala District Elections Commission, Renamo says it “will not recognise the results” because irregularities reported after the first round on 19 November were repeated on 11 February. In particular:

1. Party delegates were not permitted to watch the checking of names in the electoral register.
2. “In various polling stations during the count the presidents of the polling stations spoiled ballot papers with valid votes for Renamo”.
3. “A wave of more than 300 national observers, mainly police, including the commander of the riot police, all in plain clothes, with voters cards from Nampula, voted at various polling stations.”
4. “In one polling station a young man was caught trying to put two ballot papers for Frelimo into the ballot box. He was handed over to the forces of law and order, who released him. We suppose various youths were introducing two ballot papers into the ballot boxes in all 99 polling stations.”
5. Polling station staff refused to show their voters cards when they voted, “in all polling stations.”

We consider that three points cannot be supported:

Point 1: The claim that party representatives (delegates) could not watch the checking of names on the register was not confirmed by any observer or journalist (including those of this Bulletin), and no party representative was seen to protest about this.

Point 3: In fact there were many observers, both national and international, but there is no evidence that they were infiltrated by the police. Nor were there any protests, even by Renamo delegates, of people using voters cards from outside Nacala.

Point 5: Neither observers nor journalists reported cases of polling station staff refusing to show their voters card when they voted. Indeed, the Bulletin was in Murrupulane between 6 and 9 am and we watched the opening of four polling stations, where staff showed their cards.

On point 4, the local police commander, Alexandre Guiador, confirms that a man was arrested for trying to vote twice. But Renamo provides no evidence that this happened anywhere else. Even if this happens, as Renamo hypothesises, once in every polling station, it would only have added an extra 99 votes – not enough to change the result.

On point 2: The argument that “In various polling stations during the count the presidents of the polling stations spoiled ballot papers with valid votes for Renamo” is true, and we have already reported this in the Bulletin. Nevertheless, there are not enough invalid votes for this to have changed the result.

Thus we feel that there was not enough misconduct to overturn the result of the election. However, the blatant examples of polling station staff invalidating votes for Renamo are electoral crimes which discredit the entire election, and we call on the Nacala City Election Commission to prosecute polling station staff in at least the three polling stations where there is ample evidence of fraud.

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