



>> MODERN CONFLICTS  
HOME PAGE

>> CONFLICTS MAP

>> CONFLICTS TABLE

>> PERI HOME PAGE

## Mozambique (1975 - 1992)

Mozambique's long war ended in 1992, when the Frelimo government and the Renamo rebel force signed a peace agreement in Rome. Approximately one million people died in the years of fighting, and six million more were displaced. The war took place in the context of regional power struggles of southern Africa and the cold war. With the end of apartheid in South Africa and the end of the cold war, the conflict in Mozambique became ripe for a negotiated solution in the early 1990s. Although the country has made a successful transition to democracy, the impoverished Mozambican people continue to fall victim to landmines hunger remains widespread.

Frelimo (the Mozambique Liberation Front) was founded in 1962 to fight Portuguese colonial rule. The anti-colonial struggle came to an abrupt end in 1974, when a coup in Portugal brought to power a government determined to free its colonies. Portugal handed over the reigns of government to Frelimo in 1975. Frelimo nationalized businesses, banned other political parties, undermined religious and traditional authorities, and actively supported the liberation struggle in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa.

In response to Frelimo's support for the Zimbabwean guerrillas, Rhodesia organized disaffected Mozambicans into a fighting force to destabilize the Frelimo government. This group was called the Mozambique National Resistance, or Renamo. Renamo fought against Frelimo from bases within Rhodesia until Zimbabwe became independent in 1980. Support for Renamo then fell to the South African apartheid regime, which supplied arms and training. In 1984, Frelimo and South Africa signed the Nkomati Accords, in which each government agreed to halt support to armed insurgents fighting the other. Although Renamo still benefited from South African backing, it moved its bases inside Mozambique and adopted new tactics aimed at undermining government authority in the eyes of the populace. These tactics included targeting civilians for massacres, and destroying social services, transportation, and crops.

The fighting intensified in the mid to late 1980s. By 1988, the country's territory was roughly divided between the two groups, and the war had reached a stalemate. When the Frelimo president Samora Machel died, his successor, Joaquim Chissano, began to explore the possibility of dialogue. Talks began in Rome in 1990. After two years and twelve rounds of negotiations, an accord was reached in 1992 and supported by the international community. The United Nations created a monitoring force, the United Nations Operations in Mozambique (ONUMOZ), to oversee the disarmament and demobilization of 110,000 troops and the resettlement of 5-6 million refugees, and to organize elections for 1993. Despite delays, the peace process was relatively smooth. Elections in 1994 gave Frelimo the presidency and a small majority in the parliament, while Renamo won 45% of the parliamentary seats.

### *Print Resources*

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Abrahamsson, Hans and Anders Nilsson (1995) *Mozambique: The Troubled Transition. From Socialist Construction to Free Market Capitalism*. London: Zed Books.

Manning, Carrie L. (2002) *The Politics of Peace in Mozambique: Post-Conflict Democratization, 1992-2000*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Hanlon, Joseph (1991) *Mozambique: Who Calls the Shots?* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

#### *Online Resources*

Accord: an International Review of Peace Initiatives (1998) *The Mozambican Peace Process in Perspective*.

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#### *Timeline*

1962 - Frelimo founded

1974 - coup in Portugal leads to decolonization

1975 - Mozambique becomes independent under Frelimo

1976 - Renamo established by white Rhodesian officers

1980 - Zimbabwe independence; Renamo support shifts to South Africa

1984 - Mozambique and South Africa sign Nkomati Accord; Renamo continues war

1990 - peace talks begin, ceasefire agreed upon

1992 - General Peace Agreement signed in Rome with international support and financing, ONUMOZ deployed

1994 - president Joaquim Chissano of Frelimo re-elected; ONUMOZ withdraws