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Freedom House

Freedom in the World 2018 - Mozambique

Year:

2018

Freedom Status:

Partly Free

Political Rights:

4

Civil Liberties:

4

Aggregate Score:

52

Freedom Rating:

4.0

Overview:

Mozambique has been governed by the same political party since its 1975 independence, and the ruling party's unbroken incumbency has allowed it to establish significant control over state institutions. The opposition has disputed the results of recent elections, and its armed wing fought a low-level conflict against government

forces that persisted until a truce was signed in December 2016. Mozambique also struggles with corruption, and journalists who report on it and other sensitive issues risk violent attacks.

Key Developments in 2017:

- The December 2016 cease-fire that halted fighting between the government's FRELIMO forces and opposition RENAMO fighters was maintained throughout 2017, and dialogue between President Filipe Nyusi and opposition leader Afonso Dhlakama continued throughout the year.
- In October, Islamic extremists attacked several police stations in the northern districts of Mocímboa da Praia and Palma, killing two police officers. In response to the attacks, more than 300 people suspected of having extremist ties were detained and seven mosques were closed.
- The public debt scandal that broke in 2016, in which it was revealed that the government had taken out almost \$2 billion in secret loans, continued to roil Mozambican politics. An audit report released in June indicated that \$500 million in debt remained unaccounted for.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 20 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 6 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The president, who appoints the prime minister, is elected by popular vote for up to two five-year terms. President Filipe Nyusi of the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) won the presidential contest in 2014 with 57 percent of the vote. Voting was marred by some incidents of reported ballot box stuffing, inaccuracies in the voting register, and irregularities in the tabulation process in some precincts. Despite these flaws, international observers asserted that the election was largely credible. Afonso Dhlakama, the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) candidate, denounced the results as fraudulent and called for new elections.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

Members of the 250-seat unicameral Assembly of the Republic are elected to five-year terms. The 2014 legislative elections were held concurrently with the presidential election. Incidents of ballot box stuffing, inaccuracies in the voting register, and

irregularities in the tabulation process marred the election. International observers, while acknowledging these flaws, determined that overall, the election was conducted credibly.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

Elections are administered by the National Election Commission (CNE). FRELIMO controls the process by which the CNE members are appointed, which critics contend affects the impartiality of the body. Reforms to the electoral code passed in 2014 changed the CNE's composition to include four RENAMO officials and three civil society representatives, which was intended to mitigate distrust of the body. The CNE is supported by the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE), which handles the technical details of elections. STAE performs well generally, but is viewed with distrust by opposition parties and is known to favor FRELIMO.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 9 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

The right to form political parties is largely respected. A preponderance of parties compete, although most lack resources to campaign effectively and build a public following. Opposition leaders can face harassment and threats for speaking out against the government. Authorities sometimes deny political parties the right to hold peaceful demonstrations. In May 2017, police attempted to block members of the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM) from participating in a march organized by a leading union; authorities later relented and allowed MDM to participate.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

FRELIMO has remained in power since 1992. However, opposition parties made major gains in the 2014 elections: FRELIMO lost 47 seats, while RENAMO gained 38 seats. At the provincial level, FRELIMO suffered a net loss of 219 seats, and RENAMO won some provinces decisively.

FRELIMO has been documented by international observers using public resources to campaign, providing it with an unfair electoral advantage. During the 2014 campaign period, opposition parties had difficulty entering some FRELIMO strongholds due to hostile local crowds.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Unelected elites in FRELIMO, including former president Armando Guebuza, retain great influence and play a large role in shaping the party's platform. Guebuza has criticized President Nyusi's political positions, including his decision to engage in negotiations with RENAMO to end the conflict, and has attempted to undermine the current president. Business leaders have close ties to government and influence the positions of elected officials, including President Nyusi, on trade and economic issues.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Ethnic minorities are generally able to participate fully in political life, and people from several ethnic groups hold high-level government positions. FRELIMO's support base lies in the north, and northerners therefore dominate the government while ethnic groups from other regions, such as the Ndau, are underrepresented.

Women participate robustly in politics, both as voters and candidates for office. Of the 250 members of parliament, 39 percent are women, one of the highest rates in the world. However, cultural factors still inhibit the participation of many women, and women are underrepresented in local government positions.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 5 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4

Although RENAMO members initially refused to take their seats in parliament after the 2014 elections, they were ultimately seated in early 2015. Power is highly centralized in the executive branch, which dominates the parliament and all other branches of government. Therefore, there are few checks on presidential power.

Foreign donors have a significant influence on policymaking, specifically as it relates to economic policy and public-sector reform. Business elites connected to FRELIMO have a strong impact on government decisions, particularly on foreign investment in the oil, gas, and agriculture sectors.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption remains widespread at the highest levels of government, and safeguards are ineffective. Patronage networks are deeply entrenched and compete for state resources. The anticorruption legal framework is undermined by a variety of loopholes. For example, embezzlement is not included in the Anti-Corruption Law. The judiciary is known to be corrupt itself, which further hinders the enforcement of anticorruption laws.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Despite the passage of a freedom of information law in 2014, it is difficult to attain government information in practice. In May 2017, two nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) released a report claiming that out of 49 government entities they contacted requesting information, only 18 percent responded within 21 days, as required by law.

Mozambique remained embroiled in a public debt scandal in 2017. In 2016, it emerged that the Mozambican government had taken out almost \$2 billion in secret loans in 2013 and 2014. The revelation outraged the Mozambican public, exacerbated an existing economic crisis, and prompted the World Bank and IMF to suspend budget assistance to the country. In June 2017, an independent audit determined that over \$500 million in debt remained unaccounted for.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 32 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 9 / 16 (-2)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

State-run media's influence remains strongest, though smaller independent outlets have increasingly provided important coverage of the conflict and corruption. Authorities often direct state-run outlets to provide coverage favorable to the government. Journalists frequently experience government pressure, harassment, and intimidation, which leads to self-censorship. The government is known to retaliate against journalists who criticize it by cancelling public advertising contracts.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4 (-1)

Religious freedom is generally respected, but the government response to attacks by armed Islamists has alarmed human rights activists. In October 2017, a group of Muslim extremists attacked police stations in Cabo Delgado, a northern province, killing at least two police officers. Muslims reported feeling targeted after the government responded to the attacks by sending troops to the region. More than 300 people were detained, including Muslim leaders, and seven mosques were closed. Authorities claimed that the only mosques closed were connected to the militant group responsible for the attacks.

Score change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because of the government's disproportionate response to terrorism, including the closure of mosques in areas that are majority Muslim and the detention of more than 300 people.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

There are no legal restrictions on academic freedom. However, university professors are hesitant to criticize the government and frequently practice self-censorship in regard to sensitive or controversial topics. Indoctrination at primary schools has been reported, particularly in Gaza, where some teachers added FRELIMO propaganda to their curricula.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4 (-1)

Civil society groups claim that authorities monitor criticism of the government posted online. In 2017, people expressing views critical of the government online have reportedly received threatening Facebook, WhatsApp, and text messages. Civil servants are cautious in expressing political views over email and on social networks, as there have been reports of government intelligence agents monitoring the emails of opposition party members.

Score change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to reports of online harassment of individuals who express views critical of the government.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 7 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

Freedom of assembly is constitutionally guaranteed, but the right to assemble is subject to notification and timing restrictions. The government frequently disallows protests on the basis of errors in the organizers' official applications.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

NGOs operate openly but can face bureaucratic hurdles in registering with the government. At the end of 2017, the registration of the Mozambican Association for the Defense of Sexual Minorities (LAMBDA) had still not been approved by the government. LAMBDA first applied for registration in 2008, and has had no success in attaining government approval, despite multiple resubmissions.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor

organizations? 2 / 4

Workers have the right to form unions, but a number of restrictions impede the right to strike and make the practice rare. Public-sector workers are not allowed to strike. In July 2017, administrative and technical staff at Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM) organized a strike to protest the nonpayment of a bonus. The university declared the strike illegal, and riot police broke up the picket line using tear gas and rubber bullets.

F. RULE OF LAW: 7 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

Judicial independence is hampered by the dominance of the executive branch. The attorney general is directly appointed by the president, with no legislative confirmation process. Pressure from FRELIMO's leadership often impedes investigations into corruption and fraud. Former president Guebuza and members of his administration have been credibly implicated in fraud and embezzlement scandals, but there have been no prosecutions. Observers claim that this judicial inaction results from the influence of FRELIMO's leadership.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Although due process rights are constitutionally guaranteed, these rights are not always respected in practice. RENAMO leaders assert that the police arrest members of their party arbitrarily. Due to resource constraints and an understaffed judiciary, lengthy pretrial detentions are common. In 2017, reports surfaced of the government entering private homes and offices, as well as surveilling phone calls and emails, without warrants or proper authorization.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Although the December 2016 truce to halt more than a year of fighting between RENAMO and FRELIMO held up throughout 2017, tensions between the leaders of both parties remained high. Negotiations continued between the two sides through 2017, but at the end of the year, a peace agreement had not been reached. Human rights abuses committed by FRELIMO forces in 2016, including the murders of civilians perceived to have backed RENAMO forces, did not result in any prosecutions.

Prison conditions improved in 2017 with the opening of several prisons that reduced overcrowding, but many prisons operate well above their prescribed capacity. Poor sanitation and a lack of healthcare still plague most of Mozambique's prison facilities.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various

segments of the population? 2 / 4

Mozambican police reportedly discriminate against Zimbabwean, Somali, and Chinese immigrants. People with albinism continued to face discrimination, persecution, and violence. At least 13 albino people were murdered in 2017. Government efforts to protect people with albinism have been inadequate—a government strategy to prevent more murders was not implemented by the end of 2017.

Women experience discrimination in education and employment—on average, women are less educated and earn less than men. Sexual harassment in the workplace and at schools remains widespread.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 9 / 16 (+1)**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4 (+1)**

As dialogue between the government and RENAMO continued throughout 2017, violence in the central region ended, which made travel throughout the country easier. Although Mozambicans face no formal restrictions on domestic or international travel, movement is hampered by the presence of checkpoints manned by corrupt police officials, who often harass and demand bribes from travelers.

Score change: The score improved from 2 to 3 because the cease-fire has improved mobility across the country.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

The law does not recognize private property; citizens instead obtain land use rights from the government. Most citizens are uninformed about the land law and fail to properly register their holdings. The government must approve all formal transfers of land use rights in an often opaque and protracted process. As a result, most land transactions occur on an extralegal market.

Under customary law, women usually cannot inherit property. The government does not frequently intervene to protect women's property rights when inheritance is denied.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Domestic violence is pervasive in Mozambique and laws against it are infrequently enforced. According to the Ministry of Women and Social Action, at least 54 percent of women will endure some form of physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives. Early and forced marriages remain common in rural areas. The International Center for Research on Women reports that 56 percent of girls marry before reaching the age of 18.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Since 2012, human trafficking has been on the rise. Women and girls from rural areas are drawn into sex trafficking and domestic servitude. The number of investigations for trafficking decreased in 2017, but the number of prosecutions increased.

Child labor is permitted for children between 15 and 17 years old with a government permit. However, children under 15 frequently labor in the agriculture, mining, and fishing sectors, where they often work long hours and do not attend school. According to an August 2017 report released by the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security, more than one million children between the ages of 7 and 17 are actively employed.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

Full Methodology (<https://freedomhouse.org/report/methodology-freedom-world-2018>)

ecoi.net summary:

Annual report on political rights and civil liberties in 2017



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