

XII FRELIMO CONGRESS

Third term ambition will be the ‘white elephant’ in the room overshadowing debates on Mozambique's development agenda

- The 12th Frelimo Congress, the last to be held before the ruling party's candidate is chosen for the 2024 presidential elections, begins next Friday, September 23. More than a party matter that concerns the members of Frelimo, the Congress interests all Mozambicans for several reasons. First of all because it is the most important meeting of the political party that has ruled Mozambique since 1975, the year of the proclamation of National Independence.





Credits: Folha de Maputo

The decisions that will come out of the Congress will affect the lives of more than 30 million Mozambicans. For better or for worse. The way Mozambique is governed reflects the quality of the debate and the decisions that are taken by the Frelimo Party. The increase in poverty levels, the Government's disregard for the humanitarian crisis in Cabo Delgado, the closing of space, and the repression of fundamental freedoms are a reflection of the way the Frelimo Party thinks Mozambique.

In the closing speech of the second extraordinary session of Frelimo, the president of the ruling party said that the XII Congress will prioritize the debate on economic issues and the fight against violent extremism that affects Cabo Delgado, with tendencies of spreading to Nampula¹. Other issues that will be discussed include decentralization at the district level, strengthening the capacity for national defense, increasing production and productivity and its link to industrialization, sustainable management of natural resources, infrastructure development, electricity, water supply, gas, and security.

But the debate on these issues of national interest may be overshadowed by the discussion of the "third term" for Filipe Nyusi. Since last year, allegations have been circulating that the current President of the Re-

public would be interested in remaining in the Presidency for another five years. That is, until 2030.

It is not clear what method would be used for his maintenance in power: whether it would be through the revision of the Constitution to allow three presidential terms or would be through extra-constitutional ways, which is less likely. Within the party, the rehearsal for the third term began to take shape from May 2021, when in the middle of the session of the Frelimo Central Committee a member suggested revising the Constitution to enable Nyusi to remain in power until 2030².

Later on, the debate reached the social networks by the hand of propagandists at the service of Filipe Nyusi's consulate, and quickly began to occupy newspaper pages. Within the current Frelimo party, marked by undeniable internal friction, there does not seem to be much support for the idea of a third term for Filipe Nyusi. So far, no historical or politically influential member of the party has appeared to associate his name with the idea of a third term, which reveals weak internal support. Even Alberto Chipande, veteran of the National Liberation Struggle and a tutelary shadow, has not yet appeared to support a third term.

In fact, last August the General Secretary of

the *Associação dos Combatentes da Luta de Libertação Nacional* (ACLIN), Fernando Faustino, made it clear that the third term debate was not a matter for what is the most relevant social organization of the Frelimo Party: "This is not a matter for the ACLIN. You should ask OJM what inspired him to say that? You should know this: we are a very strong organization. A short time ago we had the Central Committee and this matter that you address to me here was not dealt with"³.

Although the ACLIN has played down the issue of a third term, the fact is that the supporters of Filipe Nyusi have not yet abandoned the idea. And the President of the Republic himself has never spoken publicly about it. That is, he never came to the public to assume his intention to remain in power until 2030 or to distance himself from the rumors, reaffirming his respect for democratic principles and his predisposition to follow the examples of Joaquim Chissano and Armando Guebuza.

In recent weeks, Nyusi has made working visits throughout the provinces with two party-political objectives: (i) to legitimize SUSTENTA as a program that is changing Mozambique's agrarian sector; (ii) to control the election processes for Frelimo's first secretaries in the provinces.

With no new *Tabela Salarial Única* (TSU) sal-

¹ <https://jornalnoticias.co.mz/destaque/crescimento-economico-e-combate-ao-terrorismo-nas-prioridades-do-congresso-da-frelimo/>

² <https://evidencias.co.mz/2021/05/26/frelimo-ensaia-nova-revisao-da-constituicao-para-acomodar-terceiro-mandato/>

³ <https://evidencias.co.mz/2022/08/16/esse-nao-e-assunto-da-aclin-perguntem-a-ojm/>

aries to be reflected in the accounts of state employees and agents before Congress, no dates for the first export of gas from the Coral Sul FLNG floating platform, and TotalEnergies' silence and vagueness about its resumption in Afungi, Filipe Nyusi needed to construct an alternative narrative of success in his governance to present to his "comrades" at the 12th Congress⁴.

So he turned to his former "super-minister" to find a solution. And the solution was found in SUSTENTA. In a tour of the

provinces, Nyusi inaugurated agro-industrial units that, like so many others built throughout this vast Mozambique, run the risk of becoming authentic "white elephants".

Regarding the second objective, everything indicates that Nyusi managed to control the elections of Frelimo's first secretaries in the provinces, putting up single candidates running for his own succession. This is a strategy to control the party machine to ensure support

during the congress to be held from September 23 to 28.

Filipe Nyusi's silence regarding the third mandate is even more worrying because of his closeness to Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda since 2000, and Yoweri Museveni, President of Uganda since 1986. Paul Kagame and Yoweri Museveni are authoritarian leaders who invest in oppressive regimes in their respective countries and have resorted to amending constitutional texts to ensure they remain in power.

Chissano and Guebuza served two terms

With the introduction of political pluralism in Mozambique through the 1990 Constitution of the Republic, the holding of regular elections (presidential, legislative, provincial, and municipal) and the respect for term limits have been the main milestones of the country's democratization process. Since the first legislative and presidential elections in 1994, municipal elections in 1998, and provincial elections in 2009, Mozambique has respected the terms of office established in the Constitution by holding regular elections every five years.

Article 135.1 of the Constitution provides that "universal, direct, equal, secret, personal and periodic suffrage is the general rule for the appointment of the President of the Republic, the deputies of the National Assembly, the members of the Provincial Assemblies, the Provincial Governors, the members of the District Assemblies, the District Administrators, the members of the Municipal Assemblies, and the presidents of the Municipal Councils".

In parallel, the elected Presidents have complied with the limitation on the number of terms of office established in article 146, number 4 of the Constitution: "The President of the Republic can only be reelected once. In other words, after serving a five-year term, the President of the Republic can only run for reelection once. Article 146.5 makes room for a President of the Republic who has served two consecutive terms (equivalent to 10 consecutive years in the Presidency of the Republic) to run again, but this can only happen five years after the last term.

Both Joaquim Chissano (1995 - 2005) and Armando Guebuza (2005 - 2015) complied with the rule of two terms in



Credits: Jornal Evidências

the Presidency of the Republic. It is true that in the last years of their rule there were rumours that both were interested in a third term. But in both cases there was no clear assumption of that claim, much less attempts to change the Constitution to accommodate a third term.

Regarding Filipe Nyusi, the main argument used by supporters of a third term is the expressive victory in the 2019 elections: Nyusi was reelected with 73% of the vote, against 21% for Ossufo Momade (from Renamo) and 4% for Daviz Simando (from MDM). But two notes need to be highlighted here: (1) like the other elections, the 2019 presidential elections were not considered fair and transparent by independent observers; (2) the Frelimo candidate was vying for re-election with Ossufo Momade, a novice candidate without the charisma and popularity of Afonso Dhlakama, the historic Renamo

leader who died on May 3, 2018.

Another argument used to justify a third term is the fact that Nyusi's governance has been marked by several setbacks, including the cutting of direct support to the State Budget following the discovery of the "hidden debts" scandal; devastating cyclones, such as Idai and Ana in the center and Kenneth and Gombe in northern Mozambique; the COVID-19 pandemic and violent extremism in Cabo Delgado.

What the defenders of this argument do not realize or do not seem to realize is that these setbacks have helped to reveal the true profile of the current President of the Republic: a President who is not up to the challenges of the country; a President who does not have a political vision for Mozambique. In other words, a President who under no circumstances should be proposed to continue in power for another term.

⁴ <https://cddmoz.org/celso-correia-e-filipe-nyusi-reaparecem-para-construir-uma-narrativa-de-sucesso-da-governacao-antes-do-congresso-da-frelimo-2/>



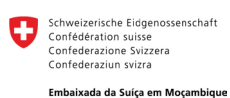
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