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Samora Mobsé MACHEL
(Phonetic: maSHEL)

MOZAMBIQUE

President
(since June 1975)

Addressed as:
Mr. President

Samora Machel publicly espouses a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary philosophy that he tempers with his own brand of pragmatism.

[Redacted] He has served as president of the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) since May 1970 and theoretically shares power with the other members of the FRELIMO Executive Committee. In fact, he dominates the regime and relinquishes only as much power as he chooses.

[Redacted] he has consolidated his power by purging political rivals and has acted forcefully to impose a socialist-oriented state. [Redacted] Machel recognizes that his regime has been made increasingly vulnerable in recent years by his country's deteriorating economy and the growing insurgent activities of the outlawed Mozambique National Resistance Movement (NRM), an anti-Communist group that receives support from South Africa.

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Machel has accepted extensive military aid from the Soviet Union [Redacted] since 1980 he has made cautious moves toward the West in order to attract Western investment in and development aid to his country. Mozambique's relations with the United States have been positive since late 1982.

[Redacted] Machel welcomed US involvement in the search for peace in southern Africa and encouraged US cooperation in developing his nation's natural resources. In June 1983 he publicly called for all powers not bordered by the Indian Ocean to remove their warships from the area.

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Machel and South Africa

[Redacted] Machel is concerned about taking any action that would increase South African support for the NRM and has therefore been fairly restrained in his opposition to the Pretoria regime. Those officials say, for example, that he has limited his country's aid to the African National Congress (ANC), a South African dissident group with bases in Mozambique. They add that after bombing by South Africa of alleged ANC installations near Maputo in May 1983, Machel took steps to limit ANC activities in Mozambique and called for a continuation of talks between his country and South Africa. (Embassy officials report that the South African Government nonetheless remains suspicious of Machel's motives and has questioned his ability to significantly limit ANC activities.)

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Early Life and Career

After attending a mission school in Mozambique in the late 1950s, Machel worked in a hospital and took nursing classes at night. He joined FRELIMO in 1963 and subsequently

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receiving nine months of guerrilla training in Algeria. He then went to Tanzania to train 250 guerrillas, whom he later led in the initial attack against the Portuguese colonial government in his homeland in 1964. The following year Machel assumed the task of supervising the FRELIMO training camp at Kongwa, Tanzania, and by 1966 he had become chief of guerrilla operations—a post he held until the end of the war in 1974. He did not participate directly in the transition government that oversaw Portuguese withdrawal from Mozambique (September 1974-June 1975). Instead, from FRELIMO headquarters in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, he laid the plans for his country's first independent government and heavily influenced the actions of FRELIMO members of the transitional government. He returned to Mozambique only on the day before his inauguration in May 1975. Currently, in addition to his other duties, he is Commander in Chief of the Mozambican Armed Forces and head of the secret police. He holds the military rank of marshal 

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Personal Data

Although Machel, who is about 51, has a generally austere lifestyle, he enjoys some of the trappings of authority.  They say he is impressive in public appearances. They add that in conversations he is open and articulate and projects a warm and witty personality. The President has visited the Soviet Union several times, most recently in March 1983. He holds the Lenin Peace Prize (1977) and the Soviet Order of People's Friendship (1980). He speaks Swahili, Portuguese, and some French and English. Machel has been married at least twice. He has several children, including two by his current wife, Graça, who serves as Minister of Education and Culture. 

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