



Mozambique Backs Down on Price Hike Plans

Violent protests began on September 1 in response to the price increases. [Thirteen people were killed](#) and more than 400 were wounded as government forces sought to quell the uprising. Now the government, which has price controls on commodities like food, water, and electricity, is backing down.

[According to the Associated Press](#), "Planning Minister Aiuba Cuereneia told reporters after a Cabinet meeting that the ... increase in the government-set price of bread — which had followed a year of steady increases on the staple in this impoverished country — that went into effect Monday would be reversed. He said an increase in the price of water also would be reversed, but that higher electricity tariffs were being maintained."

Earlier Cabinet Spokesman Alberto Nkutumula had [said](#), "The price hikes are irreversible."

According to reports, [the riots were sparked](#) by text messages "calling on the public to protest new increases in the price of bread, electricity and other essentials," Agence France-Presse reported.

The ensuing protests generated a strong response from the government, with police sometimes using live ammunition against protestors. That didn't stop rioters who looted 66 stores and vandalized three banks.

Since the protests, authorities have arrested 286 people. In a statement, Mozambique's national police said: "The majority of those responsible for these acts were young people of both sexes, the unemployed, individuals who appeared to have consumed alcohol an informal vendors." According to AFP, the statement "did not specify what charges had been brought against the detainees."

Since the end of the protests, some degree of normalcy appears to have returned to the country. South Africa, which had previously warned its citizens to use caution if traveling in Mozambique, now says it is conducting normal diplomatic operations in Maputo, the nation's capitol. Of the current situation in the country, "We've been told it is calm and as such our High Commission is open for business," Saul Kgomoitso Molobi, South Africa's Chief Director for Public Diplomacy, told *The New American* in an e-mail.



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