

From VOA Learning English, welcome to As It Is!

I'm Steve Ember.

Today we tell about concerns over a possible return to war in Mozambique -- after many years of peace.

Next, we visit farms that grow right out of cities across the United States. And we learn how these farms can have an effect on troubled neighborhoods.

Finally, we tell about Election Day in the United States.

But first, we turn to what experts are saying about the situation in the southern African nation of Mozambique.

People in Mozambique are concerned about a possible return to civil war after 21 years of peace. The former rebel group Renamo recently said it will no longer honor a peace agreement reached in

1992. It made the announcement after clashes between its fighters and government forces.

Mozambique's ruling Frelimo party won the civil war. And for a long time, Renamo accused Frelimo of fixing elections so that it can stay in power. The former rebel group has long expressed dissatisfaction at being an opposition party.

Renamo announced last month that it is withdrawing from the 1992 peace agreement. The deal ended 15 years of fighting.

Joseph Hanlon has written about Mozambique and Southern Africa for about 30 years. Mr. Hanlon says he is not too concerned about a return to war, mainly because so many things have changed in 21 years.

"It's not a return to war because neither side could wage a war. If you go back to the 1990s, Renamo was supported extensively by apartheid South Africa and informally by the United States; they had substantial military capacity."

But today, he says, Renamo has guerrillas who are in their 50s and 60s. And Mozambique chose to have a small military after the civil war and thus lacks military power. So he says neither side can return to fighting.

Researcher Elisabete Azevedo-Harman is with Chatham House, a London-based policy center. She says the roots of this latest conflict go back many years. And, she says the reasons involve money and power. She says Renamo has never been a major player in politics, partly because of the way the political system of Mozambique was established.

She also says the group never has succeeded in changing its members from guerrilla fighters to political operators. And, they have lost popular support for that reason.

Mozambique's increasing wealth from natural gas also presents a problem for Renamo. Ms. Azevedo-Harman says that makes the group feel far from economic power as well as political power.

Mr. Hanlon says he expects leaders to look to the past to settle the current issues. He says perhaps the ruling party should let money settle the problem.

Ms. Azevedo-Harman proposes a different solution. She believes the two main parties should involve community and religious leaders in immediate communication and debate. She says the leaders should have a voice – and not just the two main parties. And she believes the country’s constitution should be re-examined.

“Long term, the country needs to be rethinking the constitutional design that they have --the presidential system that doesn’t have check(s) and balances.”

You’re listening to As It Is from VOA Learning English. I’m Steve Ember.

Farms are cropping up in American cities, and they are improving the availability of foods for people in the neighborhood.

Christopher Cruise tells us about growing things in unusual places.

Farms are spreading to unused city lots and old properties across the United States. These urban farms grow crops in areas where people rarely buy fresh fruits and vegetables. They also have the power to change what people eat and the power to influence troubled neighborhoods.

ECO City Farms is an educational, non-profit organization in Prince George's County, Maryland. It seeks to empower the community by teaching economic development, job training and a healthier way of living.

The group has set up farms near automobile repair businesses and fast food stores in urban neighborhoods.

Social activist Margaret Morgan Hubbard founded ECO City Farms. She says the lack of fresh produce is a major health problem for children and their families who live in nearby Bladensburg, Maryland.

“What’s critical is that 70 percent of the people in these towns and in Price George’s County are either overweight, obese or have diabetes or other kinds of diet-related ailments because they don’t have access to healthy food.”

ECO City Farms offer several programs, including educational activities on agriculture, food and finding jobs with environmentally friendly businesses. People can also learn how to cook healthier foods and teach others how to prepare meals.

On a recent day, Philip Sidibe demonstrated his cooking skills. He prepared Alogo, a popular food in Cameroon, where he grew up.

“For the plantains you’ve got to cut them in slices and then you’ve got to fry them.”

He and other young people not only cook their food -- they also grow it in a large garden next to the Autumn Woods Apartments. The apartments are home to one thousand people, but the community has just one small store.

Margaret Morgan Hubbard says the urban garden is an agent for change and the young people are its newest supporters.

“Our program is about planting seeds, not just in the ground, but in other human beings so that the movement can grow”

She says this means not only farming food, but also making that food available to people who live in the community.

I’m Christopher Cruise.

It’s As It Is in VOA Learning English. I’m Steve Ember.

Tuesday is Election Day in the United States. Americans are going to polling or voting stations this year to elect mainly state and local officials. Voters will have to wait until next year to elect all members of the House of Representatives and one-third of the Senate. That vote is called a midterm election. Americans will have to wait until 2016 to vote for a president and vice president.

Most positions sought by state and municipal candidates on Election Day 2013 deal with local, not national issues. Candidates have spoken at political campaign events and fairs, and even used social media to present their messages.

As you would expect, each message usually says its candidate will do a far better job than their opponent.

And that's our program for today. As It Is is a production of VOA Learning English.

Steve Ember here, campaigning for your vote. Of course, we'll just accept your comments on our web site, if you'd prefer. We'll see you next time.





## **Contact information for VOA Learning English:**

Postal address:

**VOA Learning English  
Room 3400  
330 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20237  
United States of America**

Email us at: [LearningEnglish@voanews.com](mailto:LearningEnglish@voanews.com)

Or go to our website -- [learningenglish.voanews.com](http://learningenglish.voanews.com) -- and click  
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