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Attacks Against Civil Society and Human
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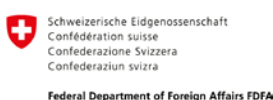


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Attacks Against Civil Society and Human Rights Defenders in Mozambique



FIDH and OMCT are both members of ProtectDefenders.eu, the European Union Human Rights Defenders Mechanism implemented by international civil society. This report was produced notably within the framework of ProtectDefenders.eu. FIDH and OMCT would like to thank the Republic and Canton of Geneva, the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the European Union, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, Misereor-KZE for making the publication of this report possible. The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of FIDH and OMCT and shall under no circumstances be interpreted as reflecting the views of these organisations.



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FIDH/Noam Le Pottier

DÉPÔT LÉGAL:

Octobre 2023

FIDH (English ed.) = ISSN 2225-1804

Fichier informatique conforme à la loi du 6 janvier 1978 (Déclaration N°330 675)

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List of acronyms

- ACHPR** - African Commission on Human and People's Rights
- CDD** - Center for Democracy and Human Rights, formerly Center for Democracy and Development
- CNDH** - National Human Rights Commission
- CPJ** - Committee to Protect Journalists
- CSO** - Civil Society Organisation
- EPF** - European Peace Facility
- FIDH** - International Federation for Human Rights
- FRELIMO** - Frente de Libertação Moçambique
- HRD** - Human Rights Defender
- ICCPR** - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- ICESCR** - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- IS** - Islamic State
- LAMBDA** - Mozambican Association for the Defence of Sexual Minorities
- LGBTQIA+** - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and others
- LHRC** - Legal and Human Rights Center - Tanzania
- LNG** - Liquefied Natural Gas
- NGO** - Non-Governmental Organisation
- NPO** - Non-Profit Organisation
- OHCHR** - Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- OMCT** - World Organisation Against Torture
- PRM** - Police of the Republic of Mozambique
- RDF** - Rwanda Defence Forces
- RMDDH** - Mozambican Network of Human Rights Defenders
- RNP** - Rwanda National Police
- SADC** - Southern African Development Community
- SouthernDefenders** - Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network
- SAMIM** - SADC Mission in Mozambique
- SERNIC** - National Criminal Investigation Service
- UIR** - Rapid Intervention Unit
- UN** - United Nations

Executive summary

Renowned human rights defender Dr. Anastácio Matavel was brutally murdered in Xai-Xai, Gaza Province, on October 7, 2019, one week before the general elections, for which he was to be an observer. This tragic event, one among many other attacks and threats against, and repression of human rights defenders in the country, is considered to be a direct attack on civil society in its pursuit of legitimate activities of election monitoring. Four years later, quickly approaching municipal elections, which are to be held on October 11, 2023, and general elections to be held in 2024, the situation of human rights defenders remains critical, as impunity of perpetrators of human rights violations remains high, and as space for civil society continues shrinking. This report outlines such findings, amongst others, of a field mission conducted by *the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders* (a FIDH-OMCT partnership) in Maputo, Mozambique, which took place at the end of May 2023.

The restriction of civic space in Mozambique is tangible. Multiple serious obstacles to fundamental human rights including freedom of assembly and association, including peaceful demonstration, and to freedom of press and expression continue to restrict the work of civil society actors. The Draft Bill on the Creation, Organisation, and Operation of Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) is a blatant attempt to control and restrict civil society and has raised many concerns amongst civil society actors and the international community, including international human rights mechanisms. Further, organisations defending the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual and other (LGBTQIA+) persons are denied legal registration in Mozambique which constitutes a *de facto* discrimination to the right to freedom of association. The violent repression of peaceful demonstrations has become common practice, as seen in the multiple acts of police violence documented in the framework of the demonstrations in honor of rapper Azagaia in March 2023. New laws that could dangerously put freedom of press and expression further *in peril* are currently being discussed. And journalists denouncing human rights violations are common targets for repression, particularly in conflict-stricken areas, such as in the Northern province of Cabo Delgado.

The operating environment for human rights defenders is highly challenging: they are facing constant defamation (as a political strategy to undermine their credibility), threats, physical attacks, and even killings. Impunity for cases of human rights violations and crimes committed against human rights defenders is sadly common practice. Land and environmental rights defenders pay a heavy price in the context of their fight against the extractive industry, for example, in the North of the country.

In this context, and ahead of the 2023 municipal and 2024 general elections, the immediate protection and safety of Mozambican human rights defenders should be prioritized, both by national authorities and the international community, as well as for companies, including in extractive industries operating within the country.

Introduction

In 1962, a group of Mozambican ‘nationalists’ led by Eduardo Mondlane founded a party called *Frente de Libertação Moçambique* (FRELIMO - Liberation Front of Mozambique) to liberate the country from Portuguese rule and domination. After Mondlane’s death in 1969, and the end of the independence war in 1975, Mozambique has had four successive Presidents: Samora Machel (1969-86), Joaquim Chissano (1986-2005), Armando Guebuza (2005-2015) and Filipe Nyusi (2015 to present date). Since then, a quasi one-party State has emerged, FRELIMO has dominated the politics, economy and social structures of the country but seems to have failed to bring much-needed social and economic transformation, as reflected in the country’s ranking in the Human Development Index (HDI), a measure of long-term progress in development (long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living). Mozambique has continuously ranked among the bottom 10 poorest countries in the world over the last two decades, and ranked 185 out of 191 countries in 2022.¹

Socio-economic disparities have widened, as well as bad governance and corruption, leading to widespread poverty, lack of access to basic services, and inadequate healthcare and education systems, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations. The country’s municipal elections are to be held on October 11, 2023, while the next general elections will take place in 2024.

Mozambique has faced a worsening humanitarian and security crisis since 2017 in the resource rich Northern region of Cabo Delgado, where, at the time of writing this note, over 1,000 people have been killed and up to 300,000 displaced in the fight between local insurgents and security forces. Growing inequalities, especially social and economic, between a Southern-based elite and Northern young people, feeling increasingly marginalized and with no future, at a time when some are set to become incredibly wealthy from mineral resources and corruption, explain in part the roots of the complex conflict.

Violent incidents involving the insurgent group formed by local youth recruited and mobilised by terrorists (the group pledged allegiance of the violent extremist organisation to the Islamic State (IS) and was designated as a foreign terrorist organisation in 2021 by the US Department of State), and known locally as Al Shabab, have been increasing, with incessant attacks on civilians, government forces, military and State installations. The group’s activities have been concentrated on the coast of Cabo Delgado from Pemba city to the Tanzanian border, including in the Southern part of Tanzania to some extent. The government’s response, however, has been marred with human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly. For example, Government forces have detained journalists for covering events in Cabo Delgado and subjected civilians suspected of supporting the group to searches, looting, and arbitrary detention. The ongoing violence in Cabo Delgado, continues to cause insecurity and displacement within the province, and displacement to the neighbouring provinces of Niassa and Nampula. Furthermore, the conflict has both regional and global dimensions.

At the regional level, segments of the Rwandan Defence Forces (RDF) and Rwanda National Police (RNP) have been deployed to Cabo Delgado since July 2021, in support of the Mozambican forces, and are funded by the European Union Assistance Measure under the European Peace Facility (EPF).² Deployment of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), with a military contingent formed by the South African army, followed shortly afterwards. Tanzania, sharing an extremely porous border with Cabo Delgado Province, has also been a strong area of influence for the violent extremist organisation, with some of its members being Tanzanian nationals, as well as a number having tangible links to local communities across the border. The presence of major multinational companies, including TotalEnergies, in the province, most notably due to the colossal Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) project on the coast of Afungi, with gas extraction projects from which the local population seems to have been excluded, to the benefit of national authorities, exacerbates tensions.

¹ <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/MOZ>

² <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/04/21/european-peace-facility-council-adopts-additional-support-for-mozambique/>

The human rights situation in Mozambique remains worrying and reveals a deterioration of civic space across the country, and the repression of fundamental freedoms. Many civil society organisations (CSOs) perceive a gradual restricting of the civic space in the country. At the same time, the government also expresses frustration with civil society's constant criticisms, without demonstrating to the government its potential value or contribution to matters of national interest. According to the CIVICUS Monitor, a global research collaboration that rates and tracks fundamental freedoms in 196 countries, Mozambique has been downgraded from 'obstructed' to 'repressed' in 2022.³ According to CIVICUS report, *People Power Under Attack 2021*,⁴ unwarranted restrictions on freedom of expression and a deteriorating environment in which human rights defenders and civil society operate, have led to the downgrade. Physical attacks, intimidation and harassment of journalists and activists have become increasingly common. The denunciation of the armed conflict and human rights violations in Cabo Delgado puts CSOs in permanent threat. In some instances, defending and fighting for justice and strategic litigation constitute a risk for HRDs in Mozambique.

In this context, and after several preliminary exchanges, the Center for Democracy and Human Rights (formerly Center for Democracy and Development - CDD) joined the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) in October 2022, at FIDH's global congress, becoming FIDH's only member organisation in Mozambique. Following this recent accession, and in light of the evolving context in Mozambique, FIDH organised a mission to assess the situation of civic space and human rights defenders in the country, in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (a partnership of FIDH and OMCT). Given the links between the two countries and the Tanzanian experience in the field of civic space, a representative of the Legal and Human Rights Center (LHRC), FIDH's member organisation in Tanzania, was also part of the mission in order to exchange and share analyses and experiences, as well as to promote solidarity and further harmony between the two organisations. The mission occurred in Maputo, Mozambique, from May 29 to June 1st, 2023. The participants were able to meet with national authorities, the international community, and Mozambique civil society.

This note focuses on the attacks on human rights defenders and civil society in Mozambique, and it is the product of case analysis conducted throughout the mission, documentation work at the national level carried out by the Observatory, CDD, and the Mozambique Human Rights Defenders Network (RMDDH), as well as discussions, and desk-based research.

The Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique⁵ constitutes the main source of protection for human rights defenders in the country, in the absence of specific legislation for their protection. The Constitution recognizes and protects, amongst others, the right to life, physical and moral integrity, and the right not to be subjected to torture, cruel or inhuman treatment (Article 40), the right to freedom of expression (Article 48), freedom of assembly and peaceful demonstration (Article 51), and freedom of association (Article 52). The Constitution refers to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Article 43), two instruments which also enshrine the aforementioned fundamental rights and freedoms. In this regard, the Republic of Mozambique is thus also due to respect the rights mentioned in the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Africa, and the United Nations' General Assembly Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Human Rights Defenders. The State of Mozambique ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 1993, a legally binding instrument, but did not ratify, to date,⁶ the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

This note aims to analyse the shrinking space for civil society in Mozambique (1) as a result of constant obstacles to freedom of association (1-a), freedom of assembly and demonstration (1-b), and freedom of expression (1-c), and will also focus on the situation of human rights defenders in the country (2), especially on defamation as a political strategy against human rights defenders (HRDs) (2-a), impunity for the threats and attacks made against HRDs (2-b), and will detail the specific case of land and environmental rights defenders (2-c).

³ <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/mozambique/>

⁴ <https://civicus.contentfiles.net/media/assets/file/2021GlobalReport.pdf>

⁵ https://cdn.accf-francophonie.org/2019/03/mozambique_const-en.pdf

⁶ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=118&Lang=EN

1. Shrinking space for civil society in Mozambique

The closure of civic space is tangible in Mozambique, where many obstacles to fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as repression of citizens exercising those rights, were documented by national and international organisations in the last years.

(1.1) Obstacles to freedom of association

The Draft Bill on the Creation, Organisation and Operation of Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs): an attempt to control and further restrict the space for civil society.

In an attempt to prevent money laundering and terrorism financing among civil society organisations, the proposed draft bill establishing the legal regime for the Creation, Organisation and Operation of Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) was approved by the Council of Ministers on September 6, 2022, and introduced to Parliament in October 2022. It came as a surprise for civil society actors, and even for the Mozambican Human Rights Commission, which met during the Observatory's mission. Civil society was not consulted in the framework of the redaction of the draft bill, which is intended to rule their creation and operations. Such a law is essential for the work environment of human rights defenders in the country.

As such, this draft law constitutes a threat to freedom of association and civic space in Mozambique. If approved in its current state, it would make it easier for the Government to dissolve NGOs, impose burdensome and constraining reporting requirements on NGOs, allow Government interference in NGOs operations, limit the ability of NGOs to use their money and goods as they want, as well their access to funding, limit the membership of NGOs to adult Mozambican citizens or permanent residents (thus denying the right to freedom of association of migrants, asylum seekers, children, among others), amongst other restrictive measures.

The draft bill raised many concerns among civil society actors, the international community and international human rights mechanisms. In March 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and association, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, published an analysis of the draft law,⁷ advising for civil society consultation, for more transparent and less discriminatory processes, among others. Other international actors, such as the European Union Delegation, foreign embassies, and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), who all met in the framework of the Observatory's mission, advocated for the withdrawal of the draft law and the consultation of civil society before the submission of a new draft bill.

The draft bill was eventually withdrawn from Parliament in March 2023, which constituted a positive achievement according to the international actors and civil society actors who met during the mission. An action plan was agreed upon by the Government and international actors from the Financial Action Task Force - FATF (*Grupo de Ação Financeira* - GAFI), and next steps include a national consultation of civil society in all provinces, and a risk analysis on NPOs in the country (all NPOs may not be exposed to the same level of money laundering or terrorism financing risks, and more targeted measures may be needed). At the end of August 2023, this stage of consultations did not yet start.

Denial of legal registration for LGBTQIA+ organisations

Although homosexuality became legal in Mozambique under the new Criminal Code, which entered into force in June 2015 (and was reviewed in 2019), LGBTQIA+ rights organisations continue to face de facto discrimination in the access to the right of freedom of association in the country.

⁷ <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=27917>



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For example, the Mozambican Association for the Defence of Sexual Minorities (LAMBDA⁸), Mozambique's largest LGBTQIA+ organisation, advocating for the economic, social and political rights, as well as the sexual and reproductive health of LGBTQIA+ persons, has been struggling to get registered for more than 15 years. Since 2008, repeated requests to the Ministry of Justice, in charge of NGOs registration, have been left without any answer. The Government denied LAMBDA legal registration based on Article 1 of the Law on Associations from 1991,⁹ which states that organisations can only be accepted if they benefit "the moral, social and economic order of the country and do not offend the rights of third parties or the public good". LAMBDA and other LGBTQIA+ groups took the matter to the Constitutional Court, which ruled in 2017 that those organisations could not be denied registration based on "morality" and "public good", thus considering Article 1 of Law on Associations as unconstitutional. However, the Constitutional Court did not order the Government to grant official registration to those groups. Thus, LAMBDA re-submitted a registration application to the Administrative Tribunal of Maputo City, in an attempt to get a decision ordering the Government to respond to the registration request, but as of the publication of this note, the Tribunal had not responded. The United Nations Human Rights Council, especially on the Universal Periodic Reviews occasion, has requested that Mozambique register LAMBDA since 2011. Other LGBTQIA+ organisations face the same challenges to legally register their NGO, in a clear violation of their right to freedom of association, yet recognised in the Constitution and international law, as up to the publication of this note, no LGBTQIA+ rights organisation has been legally registered in the country. This denial of legal registration also imposes obstacles in the access to funding, and thus also to the operations of those organisations.

(1.2) Obstacles to freedom of assembly and demonstration

Violent repression of peaceful demonstrations: a common practice

In Mozambique, the right to freedom of demonstration is enshrined in Article 51 of the Constitution as well as Article 21 of the ICCPR to which Mozambique is a State party, and protest organisers do not require a government official authorisation to hold a demonstration, but should rather notify the local authorities in writing at least four days in advance.

Human rights organisations, including CDD and RMDDH, documented the recurrent and excessive use of force by the police in the management of peaceful demonstrations in Mozambique, including killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, physical attacks, threats and intimidation, etc.

⁸ <https://lambda.org.mz/>

⁹ Lei de Associativismo, July 18, 1991, <https://gazettes.africa/archive/mz/1991/mz-government-gazette-series-i-supplement-dated-1991-07-18-no-29.pdf>



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On December 7, 2021, police officers violently disbanded a protest against gender-based violence in Maputo in the framework of the 16 Days of Activism to End Violence against Women UN campaign. The participants were reportedly beaten by the police (filmed evidence is available¹⁰), and 20 women rights defenders were arbitrarily detained and released on the same day without charge.¹¹ The police argued that the demonstration had not been authorised, although the Mozambican Constitution and the law on freedom of assembly and peaceful demonstration only requires a prior notification, which was made by the organisers on November 29, nine days before the protest. On January 31, 2022, the civil society coalition *Observatorio das Mulheres* (Women's Observatory) and ActionAid Mozambique filed a complaint with the Attorney's General Office against the police officers for "interference and making it impossible to exercise the right to demonstrate", but at the time of publication of this note, the case was still under investigation.

More recently, on March 18, 2023, following the death of rapper **Azagaia**, the Police illegitimately restricted, using excessive force and brutal violence, national and provincial marches in honor of the musician, well-known for his denunciation of human rights violations, social injustices and inequalities in his songs. According to official data from the coordination group of the peaceful demonstration of March 18, 2023, published during a press conference, on March 21, 2023, police violence caused at least 19 injuries that required medical intervention, including two protestors who lost their eyes after being shot with rubber bullets by the police rapid intervention unit (UIR) in Maputo City. In Lichinga, the capital of Niassa Province, the representative of the group organising the march was held for an extended period of time by the National Criminal Investigation Service (*Serviço Nacional de Investigação Criminal* - SERNIC) to respond to an inquiry and was only released after the Mozambique Bar Association intervened. In Nampula, more than 16 people were arrested and seriously injured. In the same province, the signatory of the march communication letter submitted to the Nampula City Council was kidnapped and tortured, burned with hot water and forced to answer questions while the agents claimed to be recording the act. During the recording, he was asked if he was the one who defined heroes in the country. In Chimoio, Manica Province, the march coordination group registered eight arrests for wearing T-shirts with a photo of the singer Azagaia. In Beira, Sofala Province, there were records of more than ten detainees, a citizen being run over and in serious condition and a minor injured. Among those arrested is the President of the Municipal Assembly of Beira, allegedly for listening to Azagaia's music. In Vilanculos, Inhambane Province, a demonstrator was arrested. In the city of Inhambane, dozens of people were directly affected by tear gas, with emphasis on a lady who felt sick when she had nothing to do with the march. And, in Xai-Xai, Gaza Province, there was one arrested and one injured¹². The Police used the excuse of a potential coup d'état to explain the repression of these demonstrations.

¹⁰ <https://opais.co.mz/policia-detem-dezanove-mulheres-em-maputo-durante-uma-manifestacao/>

¹¹ See RMDDH, Press Release, "RMDDH repudiates the illegal detention of human rights activists and demands accountability", December 8, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/RMDDHMoz/photos/pb.100070636984682.-2207520000./276383651174541/?type=3>

¹² See RMDDH, "Quarterly Report on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Mozambique: January to March 2023", <https://redemmoz-defensoresdireitoshumanos.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Relatorio-trimestral.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2LJGnhulNWzbFb4Wu0vhLe2sChG8aAr9pQdm-8oukhwkYOYwogQYZRd3k>



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As Mozambique prepares for the municipal and general elections, the safety of human rights defenders becomes an ever-increasing concern. They play a key role as election observers and guardians of democracy. Although they face great risks, especially in repressive contexts and with a tendency to close civic space, the tragic murder of Anastácio Matavel and the attacks against journalists in Marromeu make it clear that it is urgent to protect human rights defenders in the actual electoral context in Mozambique.

(1.3) Obstacles to freedom of press and expression

While Article 48 of the Constitution of Mozambique provides for freedom of expression and information, including for members of the press and media, the government does not effectively nor consistently respect these freedoms. Fear for reprisals when criticising the Government is tangible among journalists, academics, opposition leaders as well civil society at large. In 2023, Mozambique ranked 102 out of 180 countries in Reporters Without Borders' Index on freedom of the press.¹³

New laws in discussion, undermining freedom of press and expression

Freedom of press and expression are being challenged in Mozambique. New laws that would limit the space of work for journalists and freedom of expression in general, were still being discussed at the Parliament at the time of the Observatory's mission. The new draft media law (Lei de Comunicação Social) and new draft broadcasting law (Lei de Radiodifusão), first introduced to Parliament in 2021, are still debated¹⁴ and highly controversial, as they could potentially affect, control or impose restrictions on both national and international media: journalists would lose the right to defend themselves in cases of defamation against the President of the Republic (although the right to defense is part of the Constitution), and the number of correspondents from international broadcasting media and other foreign media in the country would be limited to two per outlet, to name just two examples. If adopted, those laws would constitute a worrying criminalisation of the work of journalists, and pave the way for self-censorship among them.

In addition, a new controversial counter-terrorism law was adopted and published in July 2022,¹⁵ which Article 20 (*Divulgação de informação*) part 2 provides for two to eight years imprisonment for anyone who intentionally spreads false information about a terrorist act. This provision clearly threatens freedom of expression and the press. It gives a free hand to the authorities to silence the

¹³ <https://rsf.org/en/country/mozambique>

¹⁴ <https://www.voaportugues.com/a/mo%C3%A7ambique---lei-da-imprensa-no-parlamento-pode-representar-retrocesso-avisam-analistas-pol%C3%ADticos/6563581.html> and <https://www.dw.com/en/press-freedom-in-mozambique-under-pressure/a-56962703>

¹⁵ Lei n.º 13/2022, que Estabelece o Regime Jurídico de Prevenção, Repressão e Combate ao Terrorismo e Proliferação de Armas de Destruição em Massa e revoga a Lei n.º 5/2018, de 2 de Agosto, July 8, 2022, <https://www.mef.gov.mz/index.php/publicacoes/legislacao-dngrh/1637-br-131-i-serie-2022/file>

media, activists, human rights defenders and civil society at large when it comes to independent reporting on terrorist acts and, for example, the conflict in Cabo Delgado Province where Mozambican forces are operating. Indeed, Ernesto Saúl, media rights group MISA-Mozambique's programme manager, told the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)¹⁶ that "the government has denied terrorist acts in Cabo Delgado for months after the first reports, and many journalists were at the time accused of spreading lies, so the government can very well use this [law] to silence coverage altogether".

Journalists denouncing human rights violations: targets of repression

Many attacks against journalists, led by security officers or government officials, were reported in recent years, including against journalists denouncing human rights violations committed by those actors and the violent and extremist groups in the framework of the conflict in the Northern province of Cabo Delgado. Indeed, the district has been experiencing violent extremist attacks since October 2017. As the attacks escalated at the end of 2018, the government increased its military presence in the region, who have also intimidated and prevented journalists from reporting the situation on the ground. A clear pattern of harassment and repression of journalists reporting on Cabo Delgado Province was documented by media and human rights groups, including the Observatory, CDD and the RMDDH.

In October 2022, police officers arrested journalist **Arlindo Chissale** in Balama District of Cabo Delgado Province while he was photographing public institutions, and detained him for five days.¹⁷ The provincial prosecutor accused Chissale of being an "insurgent" and collecting information for terrorist acts, but the Balama District Court subsequently dismissed the terrorism charge and granted Chissale provisional release while he awaited trial for a minor charge punishable with a fine.



On January 18, 2019, **Germano Daniel Adriano**, journalist at the Rádio e Televisão Comunitária Nacedje de Macomia, was arrested without a court order in Macomia District while covering the armed violence plaguing the province of Cabo Delgado, and detained at Mizeze prison awaiting trial.¹⁸ He was then charged with "violating state secrecy and publicly instigating a crime". The charges against him would be based on evidence allegedly found on the journalist's computer equipment, and were similar to the ones filed against his colleague Amade Abubacar.¹⁹ Formally arrested on April 16, he was released on bail on April 23, 2019.



Amade Abubacar, a community radio journalist at the state-owned Rádio e Televisão Comunitária Nacedje de Macomia, in Cabo Delgado Province, was detained on January 5, 2019, when he was arrested by police officers of Macomia district without a warrant.²⁰ At the time of his arrest, Amade was interviewing people who fled their homes due to intensification of violent attacks carried out by individuals believed to be members of an extremist group. The police handed him over to the military, who took him to a detention facility in Mueda

District, where he was held *incommunicado* for 12 days. During his 12 days in military *incommunicado* detention,²¹ Amade was allegedly subjected to different forms of ill-treatment, which may amount to torture. On January 25, 2019, Amade told representatives of the Mozambican Bar Association that military officers violently shook his body several times and forced him to sleep handcuffed. He also confirmed he had been deprived of food for a few days. Authorities reportedly investigated Amade for "public incitement using electronic media" and "violation of State secrecy" under Articles 322 and 323 of Mozambique's Penal Code. Formally arrested and charged with "violating state secrecy and

¹⁶ <https://cpj.org/2022/06/proposed-amendment-to-mozambiques-anti-terror-law-threatens-press-freedom/>

¹⁷ See Observatory, Urgent Alert, "Mozambique: Threats against prominent rights defenders Adriano Nuvunga", August 19, 2022, <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/Africa/mozambique/mozambique-threats-against-prominent-rights-defender-adriano-nuvunga>

¹⁸ Idem

¹⁹ See <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/journalist-germano-daniel-adriano-charged-with-violation-of-state-secrecy-misa/>

²⁰ Idem

²¹ Under Mozambican law, military personnel are prohibited from holding detainees in military barracks. Suspects detained during military operations must be handed over to police, who will proceed with arrests and either release the suspects or charge them within 48 hours.

publicly instigating a crime“ on April 16, 2019, he was released on bail on April 23, 2019 along with his colleague Germano Daniel Adriano. According to article 308, §1°, N° 3, of the Criminal Procedural Code, a person cannot be held in pre-trial detention for more than 90 days after her arrest. Therefore, his arrest and continued detention violated the Mozambican Constitution and the country’s obligations under the ICCPR to respect and protect the rights to freedom of expression and due process, including the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law. Then United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, David Kaye, and Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Seong-Phil Hong, said at that time that the arrest of Amade could have “a chilling effect on the exercise of the right to freedom of expression in Mozambique.”²²



Estacio Valoi

In December 2018, **Estacio Valoi**, an investigative journalist, and **David Matsinhe**, a researcher at Amnesty International, were arrested by the military and held *incommunicado* for two days in Mocimboa da Praia District, accused of “spying” and “aiding and abetting an extremist group”.²³ They were released without charges, but the military confiscated their equipment for “further investigation”.²⁴



David Matsinhe



Pindai Dube

On June 29, 2018, **Pindai Dube**, a Zimbabwean journalist for South Africa based media eNCA, was arrested and detained by police in Pemba while investigating Islamic attacks and military uprising in Cabo Delgado, and then accused of “spying”.²⁵ He was released on July 1st, 2018, two days later, without charges.²⁶

In March 2018, journalist and human rights lawyer, **Ericino de Salema** was abducted in Maputo City in broad daylight on Eduardo Mondlane avenue, the main and busiest avenue of the capital, and beaten by unidentified individuals.²⁷ The journalist’ injured body was then abandoned on the sidewalk. There have been no arrests in the case, and no one has been held accountable for the attack.

²² See UN experts, Press Release, “Mozambique: UN experts concerned about the detention of journalist Amade Abubacar”, January 25, 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2019/01/mozambique-un-experts-concerned-about-detention-journalist-amade-abubacar>

²³ Idem

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ See Observatory and others, Press Release, “Mozambique: Civil society groups call for the unconditional and immediate release of radio journalist”, April 11, 2019, <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/mozambique-civil-society-groups-call-for-the-unconditional-and>

²⁶ See <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/breaking-news-enca-correspondent-pindai-dube-released-in-cabo-delgado-mozambique/>

²⁷ See Observatory and others, “Open Letter to the Government of Mozambique: Killing of activist Dr. Anastacio Matavel and restrictions on civic space mar upcoming elections”, October 14, 2019, <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/open-letter-to-the-government-of-mozambique-killing-of-activist-dr>

2. A challenging work environment for human rights defenders

Human rights defenders in Mozambique face constant defamation, threats, physical attacks, or even killings. Impunity for cases of rights violations and crimes committed against human rights defenders is also a serious problem to be addressed.

(2.1) Defaming human rights defenders: a political strategy

In Mozambique, human rights defenders and those fighting against corruption or denouncing the Government's mismanagements often become the target of defamation, a strategy used by the Government to negatively politicise their struggles and impact on their work and credibility.

On March 16, 2023, during the opening of the training seminar for members of the FRELIMO Verification Committee²⁸, the President of the Republic of Mozambique, Filipe Nyusi, urged members to remain vigilant against all those who want to destroy the party, stating that there are civil society organisations that want to destroy FRELIMO, mentioning "the action of certain forces and organisations that, under the guise of supporting communities, seek to undermine the position of FRELIMO and the Government".²⁹

On the afternoon of March 21, 2023, in a press conference, the Deputy Commander of the Police of the Republic of Mozambique (PRM), Fernando Tsucana, stated that the national demonstration on March 18, 2023, organised in honor of the musician Azagaia, had political interests, as in which it involved "figures with political connections". In addition, Tsucana stated that police violence was proportionate as there was resistance and signs of violence from the protesters. "*The agents used non-lethal means of mass dispersion in strict observance of the principle of proportionality of forces and equity of means,*" said Tsucana. The Deputy Commander of the PRM also accused some local media of promoting a social uprising. However, the RMDDH participated in the march and witnessed brutal and disproportionate violence by the Police, even before the start of the demonstrations whose legal processes had been followed.³⁰ Further, President Filipe Nyusi tried several times to condemn and separate himself from the brutal violence of the Police, but he always showed his authoritarian face, calling the demonstrators "infiltrators" and "malicious people" who must be isolated and held accountable in an exemplary manner. This constitutes a *carte blanche* for the Police to pursue, torture and even murder citizens already identified as "individuals linked to political parties, civil society and non-governmental organisations".³¹

(2.2) Impunity for threats and attacks against human rights defenders

Beyond defamation and verbal intimidation, human rights defenders in Mozambique face daily threats and physical attacks, as shown in the following two examples, and impunity remains rampant for the perpetrators of those violations. The level of impunity is exacerbated by the weaknesses of human rights mechanisms such as the Provedor de Justiça (Ombudsman) and the National Human Rights Commission (*Comissão Nacional dos Direitos Humanos* - CNDH)- institutions that lack of funding and thus real independence from the Government and that are often inaccessible for citizens outside of the capital city, among other factors that inhibit their efficacy.

²⁸ The FRELIMO Verification Committee is in charge of ensuring that FRELIMO's acts are in strict observance of its own statutes and by-rules.

²⁹ See RMDDH, "Quarterly Report on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Mozambique: January to March 2023", <https://redemmoz-defensoresdireitoshumanos.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Relatorio-trimestral.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2LJGnhuINWzbFb4Wu0vhLe2schG8aAr9pQdm-8oukhwkYOYwogQYZRd3k>

³⁰ Idem

³¹ See CDD, Política Moçambicana, Year V n°439, "Atrocious violation of human rights and the right of peaceful demonstration", March 26, 2023, <https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Atrocious-violation-of-Human-Rights-and-the-right-of-peaceful-demonstration.pdf>

The murder of Dr. Anastacio Matavel, a direct attack on civil society for undertaking its legitimate activities of election monitoring



On October 7, 2019, human rights defender Dr. **Anastacio Matavel** was brutally murdered in Xai-Xai, one week before the general elections for which he was to be an observer.³² Dr. Matavel was killed after he attended a training session for election observers. A group of five individuals, four of whom were active police officers assigned to special units of the Police in Gaza Province, fired at least 10 rounds at Dr. Matavel's vehicle. He died in hospital as a result of his injuries, at the age of 58.

Dr. Matavel was the founder and Executive Director of FONGA-Gaza NGO Forum and chairman of the General Assembly of JOINT Liga of NGOs in Mozambique. He believed that fair and free elections are a key factor for the consolidation of peace, democracy and human rights necessary for the development of Mozambique.

The murder of Dr. Matavel can be considered as a direct attack on civil society for undertaking its legitimate activities of election monitoring.

As documented by CDD and SouthernDefenders during a trial observation mission³³ on June 18, 2020, the four police officers were convicted of murder (Article 160 of the Penal Code) and sentenced to two to 24 years in prison by the Judicial Court of Gaza Province. Unfortunately, the court did not manage to clarify the reasons and interests behind the murder of Dr. Matavel, and the moral perpetrators of this crime are still unpunished. The judgment does not give enough detail on the real motives and the reasons for Matavel's murder, nor does it demonstrate the investigation carried out to identify the moral authors of this murder, although there are strong signs in the file that the operational agents of this crime would have been ordered to kill Matavel by higher authorities who still roam the streets free. An example of the weak investigation into the identification of the planners and moral perpetrators of the murder is the fact that the court failed to investigate the phone calls and exchanges of phone messages that the defendants made on the days before and after the murder, taking into account the personal, state, and private relations revealed in the case, with particular attention to the contacts of a fugitive defendant.

The growing pattern of politically motivated violence against Professor Adriano Nuvunga

Professor **Adriano Nuvunga** is a human rights defender at the forefront of defending civic space in Mozambique who has repeatedly criticized the series of human rights abuses in the country, including cases of corruption against political elites. A leading social activist, Nuvunga is the Executive Director of CDD, President of the RMDDH and President of SouthernDefenders.



In the early hours of Monday morning of August 15, 2022, unknown individuals fired two bullets into Prof. Adriano Nuvunga's residence in Maputo, Mozambique.³⁴ According to the SERNIC officers, the bullets were for an AK-47 assault rifle. The bullets were thrown at the front door of Prof. Adriano Nuvunga's residence, at approximately 05:00 am, while he was still sleeping.

The Observatory was informed that the bullets were partially wrapped in white paper with a writing not possible to decipher in full, but in which one of the phrases said "Watch out Nuvunga". Professor

³² See Observatory and others, "Open Letter to the Government of Mozambique: Killing of activist Dr. Anastacio Matavel and restrictions on civic space mar upcoming elections", October 14, 2019, <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/open-letter-to-the-government-of-mozambique-killing-of-activist-dr>

³³ See CDD and SouthernDefenders, Report, "Investigation and Observation of Court Proceedings of the Trial of the 'Matavel Case', the HRD murdered in Xai-Xai, Gaza, on the 7th of October, 2019", October 6, 2020, https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Investigation-and-Observation-of-Court-Proceedings-of-the-Trial-of-the-%E2%80%98Matavel-Case-the-HRD-murdered-in-Xai-Xai-Gaza-on-the-7th-of-October-2019.pdf#new_tab

³⁴ See Observatory, Urgent Alert, "Mozambique: Threats against prominent rights defenders Adriano Nuvunga", August 19, 2022, <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/Africa/mozambique/mozambique-threats-against-prominent-rights-defender-adriano-nuvunga>

Nuvunga made a timely report to the police authorities and SERNIC officers went to the scene to collect the bullets and investigate the case. But, at the time of publication of this note, SERNIC officials did not come to any result and kept asking Adriano Nuvunga for more information and details about the facts. The case was eventually closed by the Office of the Attorney General, for not identifying the perpetrators.

In 2020, a similar threat was made to him when three unidentified individuals called him from an anonymous number, stating that a bomb had been planted in his home.

And in January 2020, a member of Government said, while Professor Nuvunga entered a restaurant where he was eating with other persons, that *"the topic Adriano Nuvunga can be solved with a bullet, because he is already too much in his interventions !"*,³⁵ contributing to the spread of hate speech and intimidation against human rights defenders.

Those incidents, that went unpunished, demonstrate a growing pattern of politically motivated violence against Professor Nuvunga.

(2.3) Land and environmental rights defenders: a nuisance for both business and Government actors

Land and environmental rights defenders, fighting against exactions practices and human rights violations committed by extractive industries in the north of the country, mainly in Cabo Delgado Province, also face a great number of difficulties and push-back. International extractive companies in Mozambique benefit from a seeming alignment of government interests, and contribute to local communities being both economically excluded from the natural resource sectors (coal, gems, gold, etc.), and excluded from decision making within such sectors.

Arbitrary detention of four land and environment rights defenders in Moatize

On the afternoon of November 20, 2021, agents of the PRM arbitrarily arrested **João Samuel Sipriqui, Tomo João Tomo, Maxwell Abreu** and **Lucídio Torres Cassicassica**, four well-known human rights activists in Moatize, in the province of Tete. Their arrest took place during a meeting that brought together residents of the Nhantchere and Bagamoio neighborhoods. The meeting was aimed at discussing ways to put pressure on mining company Vale Moçambique to implement procedures to reduce environmental pollution caused by its coal mining operations in the province.

The PRM justified the arrests by claiming that the meeting was illegal. However, under the terms of Article 51 of the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique, all citizens have the right to freedom of assembly, so the actions of the PRM agents assigned to the Moatize District cannot be justified.³⁶

The RMDDH strongly condemned the blatantly illegal actions of the PRM in Moatize as well as the constant violation of the rights of human rights defenders by PRM agents, and advocated for the immediate release of the human rights defenders, who were finally released after four days of detention.

³⁵ "O assunto Adriano Nuvunga resolve-se com uma bala, porque já estava demais nas suas intervenções !"

³⁶ See <https://www.facebook.com/RMDDHMoz/posts/pfbid02P6F9tXNMThj2KqeRr7nxkcWSsPfmDF3E7BtJgsU8gR9TC9ZZeABUtmhRieYEcdkDI>

Targeted burglary into human rights lawyer João Nhampossa's office



During the night of January 22, 2022, unknown individuals broke into human rights lawyer **João Nhampossa's** office in Maputo Province and stole a computer, mobile phone and several documents. The raid on the office followed a series of threats that the human rights defender had been suffering in precedent weeks. According to reports, the raiders took advantage of the time when construction was being carried out in one of the houses on the upper floor of the building where the lawyer's office is located to break in and remove all the material that interested them. João Nhampossa is one of the few lawyers fighting for human rights, especially the rights of communities affected by the extractive industry and other mega-projects, and is an active member of the RMDDH. The lawyer was previously on one of the television channels to comment on the process of sale of mining company Vale Moçambique and worked on various issues of public interest and human rights, such as hidden public debt, as well as on the extractive industry and illegal tolls installed on the Maputo ring road. The RMDDH believes that this is intimidation and not a simple robbery, as the perpetrators knew what they were looking for since they only collected everything they had on work information, including documents.³⁷

³⁷ See RMDDH, Press Release, "Threats against the lawyer João Nhampossa and invasion of his , office", January 27, 2022, <https://redemoz-defensoresdireitoshumanos.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Threats-against-the-lawyer-Joao-Nhampossa-and-invasion-of-his-office.pdf>

Conclusion

In Mozambique, there has been a concerning trend of shrinking space for civil society and alarming attacks against human rights defenders. This worrying development poses a significant threat to the promotion and protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights in the country, in a critical context ahead of municipal and general elections. Human rights defenders, who play a vital role in advocating for justice, equality, and accountability, have increasingly faced defamation, intimidation, attacks and harassment. And the perpetrators of these acts generally stay unpunished. The restricted operating environment for civil society organisations hampers their ability to freely carry out their work and stifles their efforts to address crucial societal issues. As a consequence, the silenced voices of activists and human rights defenders impedes progress towards a more equitable and inclusive Mozambique. Urgent measures are required to safeguard the rights and safety of human rights defenders and to foster an enabling environment for civil society, in order that civil society organisations can continue to thrive as a crucial pillar of democratic governance and human rights advancement.

As the 2019 general elections were allegedly marred with assassinations and significant intimidation of prominent leaders of opposition parties and election observers, including human rights defenders, the safety and protection for this category of actors should be at the centre of priorities ahead of 2024 general elections, especially in a context where it is likely that FRELIMO, in the absence of serious opposition alternative, will try to win the elections by any means possible.

Recommendations

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and the Mozambican Human Rights Defenders Network would like to make the following recommendations to the national authorities of Mozambique, the international community and companies operating in the country:

To the national authorities of Mozambique

- Enact a comprehensive legislation with specific provisions on the protection of human rights defenders in the country, including measures to prevent defamation, threats, intimidation, attacks and harassment;
- Ensure the effective implementation of laws and policies that protect human rights defenders. This includes providing training and awareness raising programmes for law enforcement officials and judicial authorities to uphold these laws and hold perpetrators accountable;
- Review and amend laws that hinder civil society's effective functioning, ensuring they comply with international human rights standards, and do not unduly restrict their activities;
- Respect in all circumstances the fundamental freedoms enshrined in international norms and the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique, including freedom of association, freedom of assembly and peaceful demonstration, and freedom of expression;
- Promote positive narratives about the work of human rights defenders in the media and society at large. Publicly recognise and celebrate their contributions, thus fostering a culture that respects and values their crucial role in defending human rights;
- Actively engage with civil society organisations to create a space for dialogue and cooperation. Encourage consultations and consider their inputs while developing policies and programmes that affect human rights and governance. In particular, hold a round of consultations with civil society actors ahead of adopting the new Bill on NPOs;
- Embrace international cooperation and seek technical assistance from relevant international bodies to strengthen the protection of human rights defenders. Engage in regional and international forums to share best practices and experiences in safeguarding defenders' rights;
- Foster transparent and inclusive processes for civil society organisations' legal registration, including LGBTQIA+ ones. Avoid unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles that hinder their work and inhibit their potential contributions;
- Pay a special attention to the safety and protection of human rights defenders and electoral observers ahead of upcoming municipal and general elections;
- Open investigations and prosecute cases of human rights violations and crimes, including against human rights defenders and journalists; and
- Extend the jurisdiction of the human rights mechanisms in the country to all provinces, such as for Ombudsman and the National Human Rights Commission (*Comissão Nacional dos Direitos Humanos* - CNDH).

To the international community

- Engage in sustained public diplomacy and advocacy efforts to raise awareness about the plight of human rights defenders in Mozambique. Encourage public statements from international leaders and organisations condemning attacks against human rights defenders and promoting respect for their work;
- Exert diplomatic pressure on Mozambique's government to investigate and hold perpetrators accountable for attacks against human rights defenders. Support the establishment of impartial mechanisms to ensure transparent investigations and justice;
- Provide capacity-building support to local human rights organisations and defenders, including the

National Human Rights Commission. This assistance can include security training, legal support, and organisational strengthening to enhance their resilience and effectiveness;

- Encourage international organisations and diplomatic missions to maintain a visible presence in areas where human rights defenders are particularly vulnerable, including in Cabo Delgado Province. This presence can act as a deterrent against potential attacks;
- Support the adoption of national and regional legislation obliging companies to make human rights and environmental rights due diligence and ease access to courts and other form of remedies linked to business operations;
- Pursue the negotiation on a legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises at the UN level;
- Pay special attention to the safety and protection of human rights defenders and electoral observers ahead of upcoming municipal and general elections; and
- Support the development and empowerment of the RMDDH, including towards its full autonomy and operation.

To companies

- Conduct due diligence insuring the identifications of the risks linked to their operations held in Mozambique and the ones of their subsidiaries and business partners, and adopt preventive measures;
- Adopt a stakeholder engagement plan, work with the communities and human rights defenders, and take all needed measures to ensure populations, journalists and human rights defenders are able to document, protest and inform on the impacts of the business activities, the ones of the subsidiaries and the ones in the value chain;
- Adopt a zero tolerance policy against reprisals so that those affected by development projects have the right to be heard without fear of retaliation;
- Set up a grievance mechanism for human rights violations so that communities and individuals affected by the company's actions at some point can see their complaint taken into account and eventually get a feedback, compensation, reparation or other; and
- Use their leverage to ensure the national and local authorities protect human rights defenders.

Establishing the facts

Investigative and trial observation missions – Through activities ranging from sending trial observers to organising international investigative missions, FIDH has developed rigorous and impartial procedures to establish facts and responsibility.

Experts sent to the field give their time to FIDH on a voluntary basis.

FIDH has conducted more than 1,500 missions in over 100 countries in the past 25 years. These activities reinforce FIDH's alert and advocacy campaigns.

Supporting civil society

Training and exchanges – FIDH organises numerous activities in partnership with its member organisations, in the countries in which they are based. The core aim is to strengthen the influence and capacity of human rights activists to boost changes at the local level.

Mobilising the international community

Permanent lobbying before intergovernmental bodies – FIDH supports its member organisations and local partners in their efforts before intergovernmental organisations. FIDH alerts international bodies to violations of human rights and refers individual cases to them.

FIDH also takes part in the development of international legal instruments.

Informing and reporting

Mobilising public opinion – FIDH informs and mobilises public opinion. Press releases, press conferences, open letters to authorities, mission reports, urgent appeals, petitions, campaigns, website... FIDH makes full use of all means of communication to raise awareness of human rights violations.

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Created in 1985, the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) works for, with and through an international coalition of over 200 non-governmental organisations - the SOS -Torture Network - fighting torture, summary executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and all other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment in the world and fighting for the protection of human rights defenders.

Assisting and supporting victims

OMCT supports victims of torture to obtain justice and reparation, including rehabilitation. This support takes the form of legal, medical and social emergency assistance, submitting complaints to regional and international human rights mechanisms and urgent interventions. OMCT pays particular attention to certain categories of victims, such as women and children.

Preventing torture and fighting against impunity

Together with its local partners, OMCT advocates for the effective implementation, on the ground, of international standards against torture. OMCT is also working for the optimal use of international human rights mechanisms, in particular the United Nations Committee Against Torture, so that it can become more effective.

Protecting human rights defenders

Often those who defend human rights and fight against torture are threatened. That is why OMCT places their protection at the heart of its mission, through alerts, activities of prevention, advocacy and awareness-raising as well as direct support.

Accompanying and strengthening organisations in the field

OMCT provides its members with the tools and services that enable them to carry out their work and strengthen their capacity and effectiveness in the fight against torture. OMCT presence in Tunisia is part of its commitment to supporting civil society in the process of transition to the rule of law and respect for the absolute prohibition of torture.

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Mozambique Human Rights Defenders Network (RMDDH)

Who we are?

We are an inclusive, and gender-sensitive network of Human Rights Defenders in Mozambique.

Mission

Our mission is to defend Human Rights Defenders and strengthen their capacities and resilience to claim their right to defend human rights, fight injustice, push back on closing civic space.

Vision

Recognition of Human Rights Defenders as a vulnerable group and increased visibility and impact of their work at national and community level.

Services

- > Rapid, practical, inclusive, holistic and gender-sensitive protection of HRDs at national and community levels;
- > Legal assistance to HRDs;
- > Psychosocial and medical support to HRDs;
- > Temporary relocation of HRDs in country and region;
- > Fight injustice, push back on closing civic space;
- > Digital security with a strategic focus on improving the digital rights and digital hygiene of Human Rights Defenders in Mozambique.

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THE OBSERVATORY

Activities of the Observatory

The Observatory is an action programme based on the belief that strengthened cooperation and solidarity among human rights defenders and their organisations will contribute to break the isolation they are faced with. It is also based on the absolute necessity to establish a systematic response from NGOs and the international community to the repression of which defenders are victims.

With this aim, the Observatory seeks to establish:

- > A mechanism of systematic alert of the international community on cases of harassment and repression of defenders of human rights and fundamental freedoms, particularly when they require urgent intervention;
- > The observation of judicial proceedings, and whenever necessary, direct legal assistance;
- > International missions of investigation and solidarity;
- > A personalised assistance as concrete as possible, including material support, with the aim of ensuring the security of the defenders victims of serious violations;
- > The preparation, publication and world-wide dissemination of reports on violations of the rights and freedoms of individuals or organisations working for human rights around the world;
- > Sustained action with the United Nations and more particularly the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, and when necessary with geographic and thematic Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups;
- > Sustained lobbying with various regional and international intergovernmental institutions, especially the Organisation of American States (OAS), the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, the International Organisation of the Francophonie (OIF), the Commonwealth, the League of Arab States, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The Observatory's activities are based on consultation and co-operation with national, regional, and international non-governmental organisations.

With efficiency as its primary objective, the Observatory has adopted flexible criteria to examine the admissibility of cases that are communicated to it, based on the "operational definition" of human rights defenders adopted by FIDH and OMCT: "Each person victim or at risk of being the victim of reprisals, harassment or violations, due to his or her commitment, exercised individually or in association with others, in conformity with international instruments of protection of human rights, to the promotion and realisation of the rights recognised by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and guaranteed by the different international instruments".

To ensure its activities of alert and mobilisation, the Observatory has established a system of communication devoted to defenders in danger.

This system, called Emergency Line, can be reached through:

E-MAIL: alert@observatoryfordefenders.org

FIDH TEL: + 33 1 43 55 25 18

OMCT TEL: + 41 22 809 49 39



More meetings