

SALO Public Dialogue on Mozambique

**SALO PUBLIC DIALOGUE:
MOZAMBIQUE**
FRIDAY 24 JUNE 11:00 - 13:00
VIA ZOOM

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 **LIVESTREAM:**
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FATIMA MIMBIRE
JOURNALIST



HERMENEGILDO MULHOVO
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ICHUMILE GQADA
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**CHAIR:
MUNJODZI MUTANDIRI**
SALO




Executive Summary

SALO, in partnership with the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, hosted a public dialogue on the conflict situation in Mozambique. Speakers included Julia Wachave, PROMURA; Ichumile Gqada, Open Society Foundation; João Feijó, OMR; and Hermenegildo Mulhovo, Institute of Multiparty Democracy.

The dialogue sought to amplify the voices of those directly affected by the conflict, who need to negotiate on a day-to-day basis how to survive. As such, speakers included people from Mozambique. In this way, the dialogue sought to answer the question of how to shape a sustainable solution to the conflict.

Summary of the Presentations

The Security Situation

Attacks are still ongoing in the North of Mozambique - insurgents have moved to new areas where they carry out attacks, as close as 40 km from Cabo Delgado. People continue to flee to find better conditions to live in - many are by themselves with no ability to take care of themselves, with a significant number of people dying. Gunfire can be heard in Cabo Delgado regularly. This leads people to panic, and they flee. Often these are people who chose to return to Cabo Delgado after having fled previously, who are again forced to flee. There is no protection for people returning to areas that are deemed 'safe' and no proper information available about safety concerns.

Ichumile Gqada from the Open Society Initiative explained how they were somewhat encouraged when it seemed like the SAMIM, Rwandan and Mozambican forces were taking back some territory and introducing some stability in the area. However, this was undone in recent weeks when the insurgent group became much more emboldened in the south, in areas they have not yet been. The insurgents have re-strategised and moved into the shadows, using their intelligence and capacity, and occupying areas where the military is not. This could have been predicted, had there been better coordination among military forces.

Women and Vulnerable People

Women and young girls are particularly suffering, largely due to facing abuse by men. They have no power to negotiate for basic needs such as food, water and shelter. There are also stories of families giving up their last-born children just to have a place to live that is not too far from the village centre.

Currently, humanitarian organisations, not the government, are giving out food aid. This only happens about once a month. Julia Wachave lamented this situation:

“For those people who live under those conditions where they have no food to eat, no house, the people who have nothing, how do you think those people will live? Who is organising a place to stay for those people? Now, it is wintertime, and this is the time when we will see people suffering a lot, especially women, old people and people living with disabilities as they have no houses, so their health conditions will be affected.”

Reconstruction and Development Plans

The Northern Resilience and Integrated Development Programme which reportedly will cost \$2.5 billion over five years, is hopefully going to be implemented alongside the Cabo Delgado Reconstruction Plan, which was also approved for a much lesser amount of \$300 million. It is still unclear how these plans relate to one another and who was consulted before the conceptualisation of these plans. Thus far, according to

Ichumile Gqada, these have not significantly improved conditions on the ground. People on the ground must be consulted on any improvement plans. She continued:

“One of the things that we are also trying to push for is that all of these plans that are being drawn up... should [have] very direct input from citizens who are most affected - the IDPs and everybody else... Then a secondary level of input is the civic actors that are supporting citizens on the ground, who have a lot to say about the conflict itself, as well as about how we find solutions to lasting peace. The other problem that we are facing... is whether these plans are speaking to one another and whether there is an actual genuine commitment to implementing these plans in the way that they need to be implemented in order for peace to prevail. I think we cannot deny that there are big international and local vested interests that are at play that are benefiting immensely from the war economy. These elites are connected to political actors. They are connected to the huge private sector that is a play in the north of Mozambique, whether you are talking private sector in terms of the oil and gas sector, or the minerals, the rubies, the illicit economy, the timber trade, the drug trade, ... there is an environment of private actors who are deriving some benefit from the chaos and the lack of security.”

Hermenegildo Mulhovo from the Institute of Multiparty Democracy added to this: *“We just think that the strategy that we have now, which is more militarisation and also monetisation... there are too many guns there, and there is too much money going there, if we just look at the numbers, but in terms of the impact on the communities, it's [low]. Alternatives [and] good solutions [should] come from the community. It's very possible to look at the conflict and look at the community leaders and just see that they have quite a lot to say.”*

SADC

The lack of regional coordination from SADC is disheartening. Currently, it seems as though SADC is deferring to the government of Mozambique to take the lead. The dialogue highlighted that many in the region are disillusioned with SADC as there seems to be no real interest to act, whether in Mozambique, Zimbabwe or eSwatini. Some levers can be used, such as the AU peace and security architecture, to pressure SADC into action.

The media

The media in Mozambique that are at the forefront of the conflict are doing excellent work in documenting what is happening on the ground. However, this is mostly in Portuguese and there needs to be a way to overcome these language and cultural barriers. Ichumile Gqada explains:

“Syndication for me is a big solution here - how do we message it in a way that says you sitting in Joburg will be affected by this, [it is] not just a Mozambique issue? Of course, solidarity does not call for us to think only in this way, but sometimes messages have to be formed in a way that resonates with people.”

The Present Impasse

João Feijó from OMR in Mozambique explained that the conflict situation currently faces 3 impasses:

“There are three main issues that are being covered especially by the press. One is the security impasse, of course. The other one is the IDP impasse, they do not know if they should stay in the resettlement camps or if they can already return to their places of origin. Also, of course, the Total return impasse. All of these variables are influencing each other because Total said that it will only return if the IDPs return and security already exists. But of course, IDPs only return if security exists, but security will also affect the IDPs and so on. So, this situation is very complex.”

- 1. Security:** Most of the territory that was previously controlled by insurgents has been taken back, as a result of the efforts of the Mozambican defence and security forces and their allies, the Rwandan and SAMIM troops. For April and May 2022, there was an operation in Macomia as a result of the Rwandan troops implementing counterinsurgency efforts in Mocímboa da Praia, the insurgents moved south to Macomia, hiding in the forests. Following this, the Rwandan troops in Palma and Mocímboa da Praia went further south to support the SAMIM troops in Macomia. There was a large military operation to move and attack the insurgents and to cut logistics. The insurgents tried to escape and scattered into small groups and attacked further south. These attacks in the south created panic among the population.
- 2. IDPs:** Currently, most IDPs are concentrated in the south between Pemba and Montepuez. Some resettlement camps have more than 20,000 IDPs and are very crowded, which affects their access to arable land in a context where the World Food Programme announced the reduction of food aid. There is a lack of capital and economic support and when displaced persons start to hear that there is more security in the north, many become anxious and start to wonder whether it is possible to return. Many try to move elsewhere, not necessarily to their home villages, but to areas close to their villages. There they become easy targets for the insurgents.
- 3. Reinvestment:** Total continues to assess the reinvestment perspectives, stating that this would depend on guaranteed security and the safe return of the population. However, some companies are still operating:

“We are watching... the Rwandan entrepreneurs that are around Palma. They are arriving in Pemba, they are organising meetings and looking for investment opportunities. But the small formal and informal investors are afraid to return. For many small entrepreneurs that I interview, their biggest fear is the behaviour

of the defence and security forces that threatens them, they blackmail, they steal, and they don't offer security. Some small entrepreneurs that were living close to Palma, especially in Afungi in the areas close to Palma, are starting to return, but not many."

The Way Forward

João Feijó outlined the way forward by stating that there is a need for long-term solutions, but that this will depend on political will and economic interests. He mentioned several interventions that would foster this:

- Investing in more security and more intelligence.
- Investing in the relationship between the defence and security forces and the local population and complementing this with policies that will diversify the economy.
- Investing in agriculture and fishing, which employ 82% of the population in Cabo Delgado but are left out when it comes to policymaking.
- Giving more economic support to small and medium enterprises that generate jobs.
- Investing in public services, especially in education, health, and technical support for local producers, including loans.
- Taking family planning seriously. Currently, the fertility rate is five or six children per woman.
- Identifying local leaders, strengthening civil society organisations, and investing in access to justice.
- Increasing the amount of natural resource revenue for the local populations.
- Creating channels of communication with insurgents, promoting amnesty possibilities for social reintegration, creating social reintegration centres, and starting a dialogue.

Questions and Recommendations

- **Betty Makupu:** *"My one concern is around SADC as a structure, not South Africa supporting Mozambique, but SADC as a structure. What is their role in this regard, including the AU? We know for a fact that SADC has a human rights leg. What they are doing Mozambique needs a lot of support from all these other developed structures."*
- **João Feijó's response:** *"Concerning SADC's capacity to have influence. I think it depends on the economic power of SADC and the power of its institutions. It's very dependent on South Africa, which is becoming weak [through the] years, and it seems that the European Union found their African partner in Rwanda to deal with this insecurity thing. So I believe SADC was forgotten from the international support and is not a player."*
- **Jasmine Opperman:** *"There is no short-term solution, that is obvious. We are talking about a generational issue of a forgotten Cabo Delgado that remains to be ignored. If one looks at the reconstruction programme for Cabo Delgado,*

and you compare that to what happened in Palma with the land, and if one looks at how the financial aid will be spent with MDP and Palma gaining top priority, it raises concerns. Our problem for people that truly focus on the insurgency is, how do you swing the narrative in Maputo? There is a reluctance to acknowledge the local roots. The Islamic State is a reality but it's also a convenient redirection of blaming and accusing those involved in the insurgency. We need an octopus of dialogue taking place at various levels simultaneously, with the politicians and regional and continental structures coming into play. You're going to sit with a problem with these structures because it's exactly those leaders that we want to swing in terms of a narrative and that is the contradiction we're sitting with, but these are the channels we have available."

- **João Feijó's response:** "Dialogue is a word that is difficult to find in the Mozambican dictionary. Of course, ISIS is a very politically convenient argument that serves to hide internal political problems. The fact is that there are external relations and to make a dialogue, it's not clear if we need to dialogue only with Mozambican leaders or if we also need to make dialogue with other international organisations. Dialogue should be a regional dialogue, maybe, involving Tanzania, Kenya, and Somalia. On the other hand, it will depend on multinationals' interests and capacity to pressure. It depends first on their will to renegotiate the exploitation of natural resources in the north of Cabo Delgado because I believe this is mainly an issue of resource control. On the other hand, it depends on the ruling party's will to renegotiate this resource control. Then, to create very discreet movements in order to create this dialogue between national leaders and insurgent leaders."
- **Corlett Letlojane:** "How is the situation of human rights? For example, applying freedom of association and assembly, are these communities able to exercise or engage in protest and in raising some of these issues without fear? What is the environment? Is the environment conducive for these communities? With SADC, my brother, I am saying that we really have a problem as long as we are going to be dealing with SADC in a piecemeal fashion. You need to organise another engagement where we unpack what we have in SADC. Do we have a human rights organ? No. SADC has got all the protocols that relate to or incorporate human rights [but] there is no organ that is tasked with monitoring implementation."
- **João Feijó's response:** "Your question about the local population strategies and how are they dealing with this conflict and their capacity to influence... In fact, it's very weak because they are without any organisations, they are not organised, and they don't have leaders that can speak to them and represent them. They are just trying to survive day by day, without the capacity to participate, without channels of participation, and with a lack of information about reality. So, they are the weak players in this game."
- **Athenkosi Thoba:** "Quite clearly, there is a protocol on peace and security, but

what about human rights? Those issues are interlinked because they touch on ordinary people's lives. I would really be interested in terms of how we also approach the relevant structures in SADC to speak about these issues when it comes to human rights because really, there is no protocol on human rights specifically."

Conclusion

This dialogue brought together relevant and interested stakeholders in the Mozambican conflict and provided a view from the ground in Mozambique. Three things became clear during the dialogue. Firstly, the conflict is becoming intractable and there is a risk that the insurgency and insecurity will persist for decades to come, as has been the case in many other parts of the continent. The momentum of the insurgent movement is rising. With this, claims from the Islamic State have increased, signalling that there could be stronger communication between the local insurgencies in Mozambique and international hubs of ISIS, as well as a potential increase in material support.

Secondly, civic actors need to be more coordinated internally, regionally and internationally to put sufficient pressure on the government of Mozambique, SADC, the AU, international energy companies, donors and other influential actors to act in a way that will bring a long-term solution.

Thirdly, the ability of local communities and local organisations to influence is very minimal and the current interventions are being conceptualised and implemented in a top-down way. The dialogue made it clear that there are a number of reconstruction plans and interventions that have been put forward but coordination between these remains a challenge. A military solution in itself does not address the many challenges in Cabo Delgado. The need to be holistic in approaching this conflict is of paramount importance.

The chair of the dialogue, Munjodzi Mutandiri, concluded with the following statement:

"I think that it is very important for us as SALO and many other organisations that are working on the conflict in Cabo Delgado to really begin to collaborate our efforts in terms of amplifying the voices of the marginalised and the vulnerable in Mozambique, but also to begin to push the region and our governments to ensure that the solutions are not just top-down, but bottom-up; and that communities are given a chance through their community leaders, but also young people, women and children, to contribute to the kind of Cabo Delgado, and ultimately Mozambique, they want to see in future."

The analysis and recommendations included in this Policy Report do not necessarily reflect the view of SALO or any of the donors or conference participants, but rather draw upon the major strands of discussion put forward at the event. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this document. The contents of the report are the sole responsibility of SALO, and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the donors who provided financial assistance for this policy dialogue session.

About the Southern African Liaison Office:



The Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) is a South African-based not-for-profit civil society organisation which, through advocacy, dialogue, policy consensus and in-depth research and analysis, influences the current thinking and debates on foreign policy especially regarding African crises and conflicts.

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