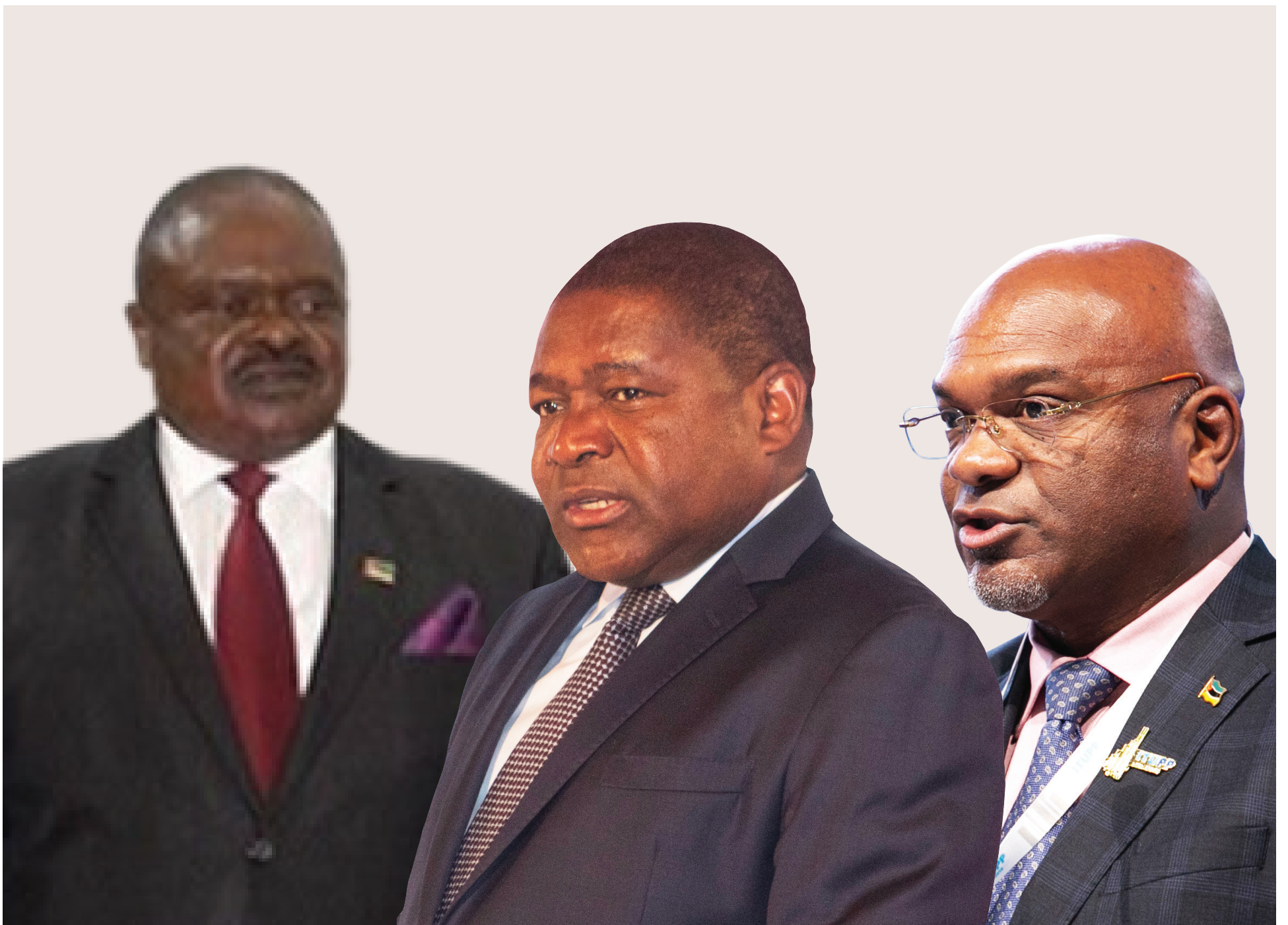


Death of the SISE General Director Linked to Illicit Capital Trafficking and Factional Tensions Among Mozambique's Governing and Party Elite

- The accident that claimed the life of Bernardo Lidimba is seen as a deliberate act, potentially the result of internal conflicts within Mozambique's governing and party elite, suggesting it may have been orchestrated as an act of sabotage.

- According to sources, Bernardo Lidimba was accompanied by the then-Minister of Public Works, Housing, and Water Resources, Carlos Mesquita. Mesquita is described as a close ally and proxy of Filipe Nyusi, the outgoing President, who had less than 24 hours left in office at the time.



Today, Tuesday, January 14, 2025, marks exactly two months and 12 days since the event that shocked the nation: the death of the General Director (GD) of the State Information and Security Service (SISE), Bernardo Lidimba, in a car accident in northern Gaza Province, between Mapai and the Zimbabwean border.

Lidimba was on an official mission in the region when, at around 4:00 PM on November 2,

2024, the vehicle he was traveling in veered off the road and overturned, resulting in the fatal accident.¹ The announcement of his death was made by then-Minister of the Interior, Pascoal Ronda, who provided no details about the incident, leaving the nation in shock and with many unanswered questions.

Immediately, questions and various theories arose about the death of one of the most im-

portant figures in Mozambique's state structure. How could the SISE GD, a high-ranking official, die in a car accident where only he lost his life while on an official mission? Why was he traveling by car for such a sensitive mission instead of using secure alternatives like helicopters, given the distance and nature of his role? What was the purpose of his mission, and why was it in such a remote region of northern Gaza?

Lack of Information Breeds Speculation

Most of the national media initially highlighted the event but quickly dropped it from their agendas. In the absence of official information, theories began circulating in the few media outlets still covering the story and on social media.

Some speculated that Lidimba was heading to Zimbabwe to procure tear gas for suppressing protests that had been ongoing since October 21, 2024. Others suggested that the mission involved the purchase of military equipment for the same purpose.²

The government of Filipe Nyusi, nearing the end of its term, stated that the exact circumstances of the accident were under investigation and that further details would be released in due course. Yet, over two months later, the matter remains shrouded in mystery, and silence from the authorities has been replaced by a flurry of unofficial information.

From intelligence sources and beyond, the Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CDD) has received information indicating that Bernardo Lidimba was not on a simple

logistical or military mission as initially announced. Instead, it was an operation involving the illicit trafficking of public funds.

According to shared information, Lidimba was transporting large sums of money acquired illegally, to be safeguarded across the border in Zimbabwe. The exact amount and origin remain unclear, with speculation pointing to toll revenues and other clandestine receipts allegedly intended for high-ranking Mozambican state officials and members of the Frelimo party.

Factional Tensions and a Deliberate Act?

The accident is perceived by some as a deliberate act tied to internal conflicts within Mozambique's power structure. This narrative suggests that it was orchestrated sabotage, revealing signs of corruption, illicit trafficking, and power struggles at the highest levels of the State and the Frelimo party.

On Carlos Mesquita's Alleged Presence in the Tragic Mission

According to our sources, Lidimba traveled alone for the mission—an unusual occurrence considering that he was not accompanied by the Director of Internal Operations or the National Director of In-

ternal Operations, both members of the Operational Command of the Central Joint Command who typically accompany him on state missions, as reported by Carta de Moçambique at the time.³

Curiously, instead of his usual counterparts, our sources state that Lidimba was accompanied by the Minister of Public Works, Housing, and Water Resources, Carlos Mesquita. His presence makes the mission even more strange and enigmatic. Mesquita is a known friend and proxy of Filipe Nyusi, the current incumbent with less than 24 hours in office. Before taking over the Ministry of Public Works, Housing, and Water Resources, Mesquita held strate-

gic positions in government over the past years, including Minister of Transport and Communications (2015-2020) and Minister of Industry and Commerce (2020-2022). Despite his passage through various ministries, Mesquita has always stood out for his influence and control in the transportation and logistics sector, securing major deals in the industry.⁴

What was the real nature of the mission, and who was actually in charge? Carlos Mesquita or the DG of SISE? This is a new question to be clarified. If true, Mesquita's presence reinforces the narrative that part of the transported money originated from the lucrative toll business.

¹ Integrity Magazine. (2024, 3 de Novembro). Director do SISE perde a vida em acidente de viação em Gaza. Recuperado em 12 de janeiro de 2025, de <https://integritymagazine.co.mz/arquivos/34094>

² Carta de Moçambique. (2024, 3 de Novembro). Corpo do Director do SISE, Bernardo Lidimba, já está na morgue do Hospital Militar em Maputo: Queima de arquivo? Recuperado em 12 de janeiro de 2025, de <https://cartamz.com/index.php/politica/item/17994-corpo-do-director-do-sise-bernardo-lidimba-ja-esta-na-morgue-do-hospital-militar-em-maputo-queima-de-arquivo>

³ Carta de Moçambique. (2024, 3 de Novembro). Corpo do Director do SISE, Bernardo Lidimba, já está na morgue do Hospital Militar em Maputo: Queima de arquivo? Recuperado em 12 de janeiro de 2025, de <https://cartamz.com/index.php/politica/item/17994-corpo-do-director-do-sise-bernardo-lidimba-ja-esta-na-morgue-do-hospital-militar-em-maputo-queima-de-arquivo>

⁴ Observatório do Meio Rural. (2023). A economia política do Corredor da Beira (Observador Rural n.º 70). Disponível em <https://omrmz.org/observador/or-70-a-economia-politica-do-corredor-da-beira/>

Money, Explosions, and a Disrupted Mission

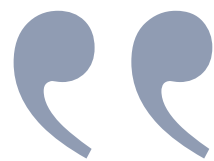
A surprising revelation in the emerging narratives is that Lidimba was transporting 10 suitcases containing large sums in dollars (7 suitcases) and South African rands (3 suitcases). Reports indicate that during the fatal accident, eight of these suitcases exploded upon impact, scattering money at the scene. The rescue team reportedly informed the owner of the suitcases about the situation and received clear orders to “allow” the population to collect the scattered money.



Illicit Financial Flows and Broader Implications

This is, without a doubt, a case of illicit financial flows, a perverse phenomenon deeply rooted in Mozambique’s economy. Such activities drain significant resources needed to advance the country’s development agenda and improve the living conditions of millions of Mozambicans. For instance, it is estimated that over \$802 million was illicitly expatriated from the country between 2019 and 2023, according to data provided by the Attorney General’s Office through the Central Office for Combating Organized and Transnational Crime (GCCOT) last year⁵. This is just the tip of the iceberg of the actual losses, especially considering the “hidden” nature of these flows.

The destination of the money is also intriguing. Information shared by sources, under the condition of anonymity, suggests that the suitcases were to be delivered across the border in Zimbabwe, with an escort of a similar profile. Despite the lack of official confirmation, it is speculated that the recipient of the shipment was connected to high-ranking levels of the Zimbabwean government. Furthermore, it is believed that the money transported by Lidimba was not intended for official project payments. Instead, it was described as an “order from the Big Boss to be safeguarded.”



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Conclusion

The need for an independent and thorough investigation is evident. It is unreasonable for narratives of this nature to be treated lightly, especially when they involve a high-ranking figure in the state intelligence apparatus. The official silence surrounding the case only fuels speculation, creating a climate of distrust that undermines the credibility of national institutions. Authorities must provide detailed and clear information about the incident.

Cases of illicit capital trafficking, particularly at high levels of the state, pose a direct threat to the country’s economic, political, and social stability. A lack of action not only perpetuates impunity but also erodes public confidence in institutions meant to protect national interests. In this sense, the CDD reiterates the urgency of an official clarification addressing, unequivocally, all suspicions raised concerning the death of Bernardo Lidimba.




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EDITORIAL INFORMATION:

Property: CDD – CENTRO PARA DEMOCRACIA E DIREITOS HUMANOS
Director: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga
Editor: André Mulungo
Author: CDD
Layout: CDD

Address:
Rua de Dar-Es-Salaam Nº 279, Bairro da Sommerschild, Cidade de Maputo.
Telephone: +258 21 085 797

 CDD_moz
E-mail: info@cddmoz.org
Website: <http://www.cddmoz.org>

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