

Attacks on Mozambican vehicles in South Africa: Silence from the Mozambican government could precipitate acts of retaliation

- Faced with acts of violence that violate the rights to security, freedom of movement, and property, the Government's silence is consolidating the perception that it is insensitive to the suffering of its citizens and incapable of pressuring the South African authorities to resolve the problem of insecurity on the Maputo – Durban road corridor.



- And because the victims feel abandoned by the Government, worrying signs of retaliation and justice into their own hands are starting to appear: this week the first case of burning of a car with South African registration in Mozambican territory was recorded.

At least 14 vehicles registered in the Republic of Mozambique were burned in South Africa by unknown persons, a phenomenon that is causing substantial damage to owners and conditioning Mozambican travel to that neighboring country, using the Maputo – Durban route.

The most recent case happened this week, when a Mozambican driver transporting goods on the Durban-Maputo route was intercepted, in South African territory, by three individuals who forced him to abandon the vehicle. Then they burned the car¹.

Attacks against private and passenger vehicles with Mozambican registration began in January this year, but it was in February that the situation worsened, causing panic and huge damage. And it was no wonder: in addition to jeopardizing the right to safety, attacks against vehicles with Mozambican registration in South African territory limit the right to freedom of movement and seriously violate the right to property.

At the end of January, after so much pressure from the media, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation said that a security device had already been set up to prevent attacks against vehicles with Mozambican registration in South Africa. On the same day that Verónica Macamo spoke to the press, a car with Mozambican registration was burned in South Africa².

Mozambican carriers operating on the Maputo – Durban route feel abandoned by the government, which accuses them of doing nothing to put pressure on the South African authorities to resolve the problem of insecurity. The Government has been guided by silence concerning this case, a situation that increases the feeling of abandonment and lack of protection for the victims.

Tired of adding losses and desperate for the Government's apathy, on February 14, dozens of Mozambican transporters cut, for a few hours, traffic at the Ponta D'Ouro border post, entry, and exit gate for vehicles that make the route Maputo – Durban. Carriers concentrated around 40 vehicles on the border in protest against insecurity in South African territory³.



The protests at the Ponta D'Ouro border took place a week after the Minister of Police of South Africa and the Minister of the Interior of Mozambique met, in Cape Town, to analyze the situation of attacks against Mozambican vehicles. However, the results of the meeting were not made public⁴.

At the end of February, the delegations

from South Africa and Mozambique met in the Mozambican capital to discuss the problems of lack of security in the Maputo – Durban corridor, where the preferred targets of attacks are vehicles with Mozambican license plates. Speaking to the press, the Government representative at the meeting limited himself to saying that insecurity is on the South African side and

¹ <https://opais.co.mz/mais-um-carro-mocambicano-queimado-na-africa-do-sul/>

² <https://opais.co.mz/mais-uma-viatura-foi-queimada-na-africa-do-sul/>

³ <https://www.dw.com/pt-002/transportadores-mo%C3%A7ambicanos-bloqueiam-fronteira-com-%C3%A1frica-do-sul/a-64701588>

⁴ <https://www.dw.com/pt-002/transportadores-mo%C3%A7ambicanos-bloqueiam-fronteira-com-%C3%A1frica-do-sul/a-64701588>

that it was up to the authorities of that country to guarantee the normal functioning of the transport corridors.

“We are doing our part and we also demand that the South African Government does its part. For our part, we have our safe corridors. I can confirm that and the South African side must also keep the corridors safe”, said Fernando Ouana, from the Ministry of Transport and Communications⁵.

It is this type of response that makes Mozambican transporters desperate: “Major damage. I started working on that [burned] car last December. He only made three trips and I lost four and a half million there. At the moment, we are at a standstill and the South Africans are the ones operating alone and our Government is not saying anything either”⁶, lamented Luciano Muiambo, a transporter who saw one of his buses burnt in South Africa.

“It is irreparable damage. Even if one day I get money and buy another vehicle, it is not possible to repair it”, complained another operator of the Maputo – Durban route who lost a vehicle⁷. At the beginning of the week, another vehicle was set on fire in South Africa, a situation that increased the feeling of revolt on the part of Mozambican transporters: “We have no alternative routes because wherever we go there are criminals to attack us and burn our cars. We have cars parked in parks and the business is no longer profitable. We even tried to solve it by closing the Ponta do Ouro border so that the Government could react. But even so, we do not



hear or see answers and our vehicles continue to be attacked”⁸, lamented Raimundo Muchanga.

And because the feeling of abandonment is already dominating Mozambican transporters, dangerous signs of retaliation and justice into one’s own hands are starting to appear. For example, this week there was a record of a burned vehicle on the road leading to the Ponta D’Ouro border, in the district of Matutuine, Maputo province. Unidentified⁹ individuals set fire to a passenger transport vehicle with South African registration, which had departed from the Junta Terminal, in Maputo City, bound for Durban.

The Mozambican Police explained that it was a planned action in which individuals

pretending to be passengers immobilized the vehicle, removed the ignition key, and then doused the vehicle with fuel, at the same time forcing its occupants to leave, before setting the car on fire.

Although condemnable at all levels, acts of retaliation, such as the vandalism of a car with South African registration in Mozambican territory, were already foreseeable due to the manifest inability of the Government of Mozambique to pressure the South African authorities to solve the problem of insecurity. In addition to showing itself incapable of putting pressure on Pretoria to restore order on the Maputo – Durban road corridor, the Mozambican government is not communicative concerning a situation of violence that violates human rights.

⁵ <https://opais.co.mz/mocambique-e-africa-do-sul-discutem-seguranca-no-transporte/>

⁶ <https://opais.co.mz/mocambique-e-africa-do-sul-discutem-seguranca-no-transporte/>

⁷ <https://opais.co.mz/mocambique-e-africa-do-sul-discutem-seguranca-no-transporte/>

⁸ <https://opais.co.mz/mais-um-carro-mocambicano-queimado-na-africa-do-sul/>


⁹ <https://cartamz.com/index.php/politica/item/13127-retaliacao-desconhecidos-incendeiam-viatura-sul-africana-em-matutuine>



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