



BOLETIM SOBRE DIREITOS HUMANOS



<https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu>

www.cddmoz.org

Tuesday, March 25, 2025 | Year V, NO. 412 | Director: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga | English



INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE

Arrest of Rodrigo Duterte under ICC warrant inspires mozambican civil society to demand accountability from national leaders for similar crimes



Former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte was arrested on March 9 and subsequently transferred to The Hague to face charges of crimes against humanity related to the “war on drugs” that he initiated during his presidency from 2016 to 2022. During that period, Duterte implemented an aggressive campaign against drug trafficking, resulting in thousands of deaths. It is estimated that between 6,000 people (according to Philippine National Police data) and 30,000 people (according to human rights organizations) were killed in police operations and by death squads allegedly directed by the government.¹

The arrest of Duterte marks a critical moment for the International Criminal Court (ICC), which has faced challenges to its credibility and effectiveness. The detention of a high-profile political figure demonstrates the ICC’s capacity to hold leaders accountable for serious human rights violations, regardless of their status or influence.

Regarding the arrest of the former president of the Philippines, the Court stated that it retains jurisdiction over alleged crimes committed in the Philippines, despite the country’s withdrawal from the ICC in 2019. Many of the acts for which Duterte is being accused occurred during the period when the Philippines was still bound by the ICC’s governing statutes.

The situation in the Philippines brings to the surface similar issues in Mozambique, where, during President Filipe Jacinto Nyusi’s administration, there has been a sharp rise in politically motivated assassinations allegedly ordered by the Mozambican government leadership—especially during election periods.

Publicly, over the past ten years—coinciding with the administration of the recently departed president, who has now given way to a new leadership cycle under Daniel Chapo—the actions of death squads have become increasingly alarming. In 2015, shortly after Nyusi assumed the presidency, Professor Gilles Cistac, an intellectual who advocated for decentralization, was brutally assassinated. From that moment on, there was an escalation of

attacks against journalists, human rights defenders, and election observers.

The assassination of activist and electoral observer Anastácio Matavel on October 7, 2019—shot 11 times in broad daylight in the city of Xai-Xai, Gaza Province—marked a critical turning point. Carried out by state security forces, the killing exemplified how the State’s security apparatus has been used to silence critical voices, especially during election periods.²

Despite the continued actions of death squads—which have resulted in the barbaric killings of numerous Mozambicans—the post-electoral protests, which in turn led to hundreds of deaths, thousands of injuries, and arbitrary arrests, revealed the most decadent face of the regime led by Nyusi. These events allowed the Defense and Security Forces—particularly the Protection Police, the Rapid Intervention Unit, and the National Criminal Investigation Service—to kill approximately 600 Mozambicans who were peacefully protesting in demand of electoral truth after the announcement and proclamation of manifestly fraudulent election results, as well as protesting the rising cost of living, which had worsened significantly under FRELIMO’s governance over the past 10 years.

Several cases, abundantly documented and widely reported by both mainstream and alternative media outlets, reveal incidents of shootings, the use of military vehicles as instruments of physical aggression against protesters, improper use of tear gas canisters (including the use of helicopters to deploy them), kidnappings followed by assassinations of individuals allegedly involved in the protests, and political persecution.

One of the most shocking displays of the extreme brutality of the Nyusi-led government occurred on December 25, when approximately 1,500 prisoners were deliberately released from the Central Prison and the Maximum Security Prison, only to be hunted down, captured, crammed back into prison yards and cells, and summarily executed. About 104 Mozambicans, who had been serving their sentences, lost their lives in this massacre.

¹ The Associated Press. AP, 2025. Disponível em: <https://apnews.com/article/duterte-icc-court-philippines-hague-crime-aa6cb968ba8232856d4463ff71cfa0e5>. Acessado em: 14 de Março de 2025.

² Política Moçambicana. CDD, 2025, Disponível em https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Esquadros-da-Morte-a-Solta-em-Mocambique-.pdf?fbclid=IwY2xjawJBDjIleHRuA2FibQIxMAABH-cp_oV8UPI19s8xkO_1wflYo0pgZUoqXcOtHTZl45y8K0YlyzB1faVLfw_aem_ZfHdIXlOI529a7MGw6bq3g

The need for accountability

The arrest of Duterte sets an important precedent, demonstrating that leaders can and must be held accountable for actions that violate the human rights of their citizens. Above all, it shows that States can, in the interest of justice, surrender their own citizens to international courts to be tried for their crimes.

In Mozambique, allegations of excessive use of force against peaceful protesters and the deaths resulting from such actions—added to the various killings perpetrated by death squads during Nyusi's administration—demand an impartial and

comprehensive investigation. This must include avoiding the discrediting of reports aired by television stations and, especially, those emerging from alternative information platforms, which have consistently exposed crimes against humanity committed by the Nyusi leadership.

International justice must act consistently, ensuring that all leaders who commit abuses are held accountable, regardless of their status or influence. Only through transparent and fair judicial processes can atrocities against civilians go unpunished, thereby promoting justice and lasting peace.





MISSÃO:

Inspirar e impulsionar ações para proteger os direitos humanos, fortalecer a democracia e promover a justiça.


MISSION:

Inspiring and driving actions to protect human rights, strengthen democracy, and promote justice.

EDITORIAL INFORMATION

Property: CDD – Centro para Democracia e Direitos Humanos
Director: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga
Editor: André Mulungo
Program Assistants: Artur Malate; Sheila Wilson; Marcia Massosste; Florentina Cassabue.
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>

FINANCING PARTNERS

