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Maganja community resists intimidation and demands justice in the compensations promised by TotalEnergies

- Members of the Maganja community in Cabo Delgado are facing great pressure and intimidation due to their strong stance against the monetary compensation proposals offered by TotalEnergies. These individuals, directly affected by the company's mega natural gas project, rejected the proposal presented on December 31, 2024, demanding the restoration of lands promised more than six years ago.





TotalEnergies



The situation in Maganja is a stark example of the challenges faced by local communities in the face of megaprojects that disregard the social and cultural impact of their operations. It also highlights the urgent need for corporate accountability and a justice system that defends the rights of the most vulnerable.



In retaliation for their rejection, the National Criminal Investigation Service (SERNIC) notified community members to appear at the police station on January 13, 2025. According to the communities, this intimidation tactic is not isolated and has been a recurring practice against communities that challenge the interests of megaprojects in Mozambique.

The situation reflects a profound disregard for the rights of local communities and previously established agreements. For the inhabitants of Maganja, the issue goes beyond financial values: it is about preserving their livelihoods, culture and dignity. “We want our land back, as promised. This is not a crime,” the residents say.

The non-governmental organization Justiça Ambiental (JA!) expressed its strong condemnation of the intimidation practices against community members and stressed TotalEnergies’ responsibility to fulfill its commitments. JA! stressed that it was unacceptable that a company of such magnitude should refuse to respect the rights of landowners and the agreements. “If Total cannot honor its commitments and respect the communities, it should leave the territory,” the organization stated.

Unfortunately, this is not the first case of corporate intimidation in Mozambique. On 26 November 2024, workers at the Jindal Group in Mozambique staged a protest in Tete Province in response to allegations of irregular payments and intimidation. The workers claimed that their wages were not being paid as agreed and accused the company of using politicians to coerce them into continuing to work, despite adverse conditions. This incident demonstrates a worrying pattern of companies using pressure tactics to silence or coerce communities and workers who are trying to defend their rights.

The Petroleum Law, which sets out clear guidelines on the relationship between companies and human rights, reinforces the need for the protection and inclusion of these communities in all decision-making processes. Article 7 of the Petroleum Law, for example, requires that the mining contract include a memorandum of understanding between the government, the company, and the affected communities. This memorandum is essential to ensure that the concerns and demands of communities, such as those in Maganja, are formally acknowledged and respected. In addition, the same article provides for dispute resolution mechanisms, such as arbitration, to deal

with conflicts fairly and transparently.

The situation in Maganja also raises the issue of the termination of land use and benefit rights, as provided for in Article 9. Although the law provides that this can only occur upon payment of fair compensation, the community has expressed its dissatisfaction with the proposals presented by TotalEnergies, which only include financial compensation, ignoring the promise of land restoration made more than six years ago.

Articles 7 and 8 reinforce the right of communities to fair and transparent compensation in cases of relocation. For the families of Maganja, this means not only receiving adequate housing and compensation but also support for the development of activities that ensure their food and nutritional security. In addition, Article 11, which requires the involvement of communities in all phases of the mining project, is particularly relevant in the case of Maganja. The exclusion of communities from decision-making processes and the imposition of unilateral solutions violate not only the law but also the basic principles of respect for human rights.

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It is important to highlight that TotalEnergies is a member of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPI) Initiative, an international platform that aims to promote good practices in security management and respect for human rights, especially in areas affected by extractive sector activities. Since the establishment of the VPI in Mozambique in 2021, the Center for Democracy and Human Rights (CDD) has played a key role as secretariat, facilitating coordination between the Government, companies, and civil society to address security challenges and ensure the protection of the rights of local communities. In the country, the initiative has two Working Groups. The National Group, based in Maputo, focuses on strategic and political issues, promoting alignment between the various stakeholders at the national level. The Technical Group, located in the province of Cabo Delgado, has an operational focus, dealing directly with security and human rights dynamics in the areas most impacted by extractive projects.



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EDITORIAL INFORMATION

Property:	CDD – Centro para Democracia e Direitos Humanos
Director:	Prof. Adriano Nuvunga
Editor:	André Mulungo
Author:	Hélio Siteo
Layout:	CDD

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

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

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