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Transitional justice in Mozambique – A path with no alternative



PROF. TIM MURITHI (INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION – IJR)

1. Introduction and expression of solidarity

During the high-level webinar held on 11 March 2025 — “Truth and Justice for Human Rights Violations in the Post-Electoral Context in Mozambique” — Prof. Tim Murithi, transitional justice expert and director of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR), opened his intervention by paraphrasing Archbishop Desmond Tutu: “There will be no future without some form of transitional justice, reconciliation, or a similar process.”

With this affirmation, he expressed his strong support for the initiative and his solidarity with

the Mozambican people in their pursuit of justice, truth, and reparation. Acknowledging that other speakers — such as Anna Moyo, Dzikamai Bere, and Zenalda Machado — had already addressed the foundations of transitional justice, Murithi focused his contribution on three key areas:

1. Political and institutional engagement;
2. The regional dimension of transitional justice;
3. The active role of Mozambican citizens, even in adverse conditions.

2. Political and institutional engagement

Murithi considered recent developments — such as the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between political parties — to be encouraging. This document could open space for active involvement by civil society organisations such as CDD in advocating for the establishment of a National Truth and Accountability Commission.

He emphasized that Mozambique should follow its own path, one that is tailored to its historical, cultural, and political context — avoiding the mere replication of international models.

Reconciliation, he argued, is an intergenerational and long-term process that requires specific legislation: a “Truth and Accountability Act.”

In the absence of political will, Murithi encouraged civil society not to wait for state permission. Instead, they should self-organize, build coalitions, and begin legitimate processes of listening, documentation, knowledge production, and grassroots mobilisation. Evidence-based knowledge is essential for strengthening dialogue with public institutions and the international community.

3. The Importance of knowledge production

Prof. Murithi stressed the importance of rigorous political analysis, qualitative research, and systematic documentation as tools to inform public policy and influence institutional stakeholders.

Drawing on IJR’s experience in South Africa and other post-conflict contexts, he suggested carrying out participatory diagnostics, victim surveys, and studies on local institutional conditions. These inputs can support the formulation of a national transitional justice plan and help drive regional and international advocacy efforts.

4. The regional dimension of transitional justice

For Murithi, the violence and repression of 2024 are not isolated events but a continuation of unresolved historical wounds. The absence of a robust transitional justice process following the 1992 General Peace Agreement left deep scars in Mozambican society.

Superficial reconciliation, the exclusion of victims from peacebuilding processes, impunity for perpetrators, and the lack of structural reforms have all fueled new waves of violence, such as the insurgency in Cabo Delgado. Socioeconom-

ic inequality, marginalisation in the north, and the legacy of colonialism and regional apartheid further aggravate the situation.

Therefore, transitional justice cannot be limited to the national level — it must also be regional. The experience of Kenya, where the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report held British colonialism accountable and led to compensation for victims of the Mau Mau movement, is a powerful example. Mozambique, too, must courageously confront the full extent of its history.

5. Transitional Justice: A human necessity, not a political choice

Murithi reiterated that transitional justice is not a political luxury — it is a **human imperative**. Where there is pain, violation, and trauma, there must be healing, the restoration of dignity, and institutional reform.

Despite state resistance, attempted process capture, and institutional fragility, the effort must continue. There are committed leaders — like Prof. Adriano Nuvunga and Zenalda Machado — and the African Union has already expressed its support. The path is open; it must now be walked with courage and vision.

6. Conclusion: The way forward

For Prof. Tim Murithi, transitional justice is no longer an option — it is a historical and moral urgency. It represents the only viable path for Mozambique to rebuild its social contract in a genuine way, based on the pillars of truth, accountability, reparation, and reconciliation. The country has postponed confronting its open wounds for too long. Ignoring the past — or responding to it with silence and impunity — only perpetuates violence.

As he emphasized, the central question is no longer whether we should do this, but **how to do it** with justice, depth, consistency, and inclusion. This will require not only political courage but also collective will — from civil society, affected communities, youth, victims, and leaders who refuse to normalize pain.

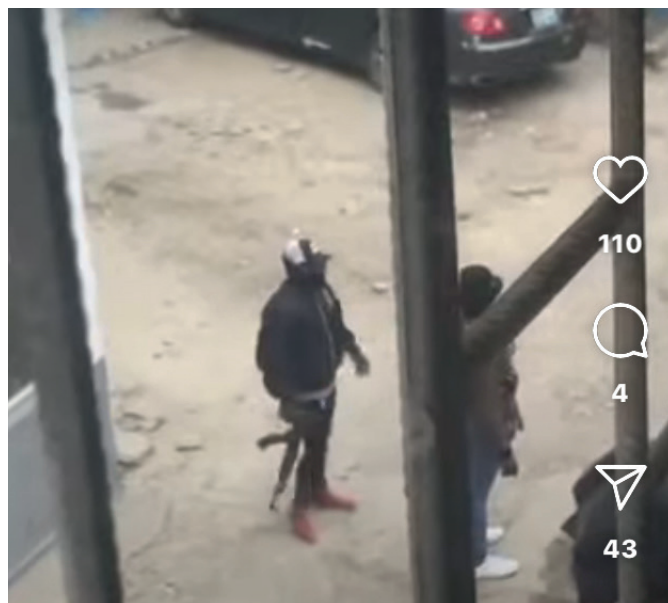
The success of this process will depend especially on:

- the **mobilisation of civil society** to sus-

tain the call for justice;

- **active listening to victims**, whose voices must be at the heart of national reconstruction;
- **regional and continental engagement**, so that Mozambique becomes part of a broader African movement for truth, memory, and justice;
- and the ability to **transform suffering into transformative action**, pain into solidarity, and memory into a shared commitment to the future.

The **quality of peace Mozambique can achieve will directly depend on the quality and integrity of its transitional justice process**. Walking this path will not be easy, but it is the only true way forward for a country that seeks to heal its wounds and move forward with dignity toward lasting peace.





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