



PLATFORM FOR DIALOGUE FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN CABO DELGADO



GUARDIÃO DA DEMOCRACIA E DIREITOS HUMANOS | www.cddmoz.org

Friday, February 10, 2022 | Year III, Number 13 | Director: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga | English

Stabilizing Cabo Delgado means much more than creating conditions for the private sector to operate

- CDD and GGA brought together experts to discuss the state of the conflict in Cabo Delgado, more than five years after the first attacks. Contrasting with the official narrative that talks about restoring security, the speakers warn that stabilizing Cabo Delgado is much more than creating conditions for the resumption of gas projects in the Rovuma Basin. Stabilizing Cabo Delgado means encouraging frank and open dialogue, promoting inclusive governance, and creating socio-economic conditions for citizens better than those that spurred violent extremism.





At a time when Cabo Delgado is experiencing an upsurge in attacks by violent extremists, the CDD, in partnership with *Good Governance Africa* (GGA), a civil society organization based in South Africa, organized a reflection on the current situation of the conflict, five years after the first attacks registered in October 2017. During that period, violent extremism in Cabo Delgado caused the death of around four thousand people, mostly civilians, and the forced displacement of more than 800 thousand people who are currently facing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

There are also records of the destruction of thousands of hundreds of homes, schools, health centers, public, and private infrastructure, in addition to having forced the interruption of gas projects in the Rovuma Basin, with emphasis on Mozambique LNG, led by the French company TotalEnergies and which represents the largest private investment in Africa (about US\$23 billion).

Chris Maroleng, Executive Director of the GGA, was the moderator of the reflection and,

in the introductory notes, underlined the need to study and discuss the root causes that drove the conflict in Cabo Delgado. “In many cases, the root causes of conflict stem from a lack of inclusive governance. Inclusive governance can be defined as that process that determines who gets what, when, how, and whether this process of determining authorities is focused on the citizen or simply on political elites and business leaders. One of the things we advocate is that for a military crisis, a military solution can lead to a cessation of hostilities in the short term. But more action is needed to pacify those who are described as violent extremists”.

The Executive Director of the CDD understands that the armed conflict in Cabo Delgado is becoming a problem forgotten by the Government. “The country’s leadership seems to be focusing on other aspects of political governance and less on the conflict in Cabo Delgado. There was a significant push from the top to meet the basic requirements demanded by the international private sector (TotalEnergies) as a condition for the resumption of activities. We have

seen significant changes, but from the point of view of multisectoral engagement for conflict resolution, we do not have anything significant happening there”, explained Prof. Adriano Nuvunga.

On the causes of the conflict, the Executive Director points to governance problems. “The nation’s governance is failing and is giving space for violent extremism to expand in the way it has managed to. At a time when there is an appeal for dialogue, the Government is approving legislation that aims to prevent civic space for a free civil society from operating, and bring to the de-

bate the multiple community perspectives on the construction of our Mozambique. Current policies are informed by government-centric perspectives, which are neither quite inclusive nor properly legitimate”.

Prof. Adriano Nuvunga criticized the Government’s militaristic approach: “Without a proper strategy for inclusive governance, you can train a million men and women for the Army, that doesn’t lead to any stability. Stabilizing Cabo Delgado is not just about creating conditions for the private sector to operate”.

“It is necessary to complement the military intervention with an investment in human security”, Prof. Anthony Van Nieuwkerk

Prof. Anthoni Van Nieuwkerk, from the Thabo Mbeki School of Governance – UNISA (University of South Africa), argued that the Mozambican Government should work with SADC, the African Union, and international partners in designing a comprehensive national and local strategy to prevent and combat violent extremism, bearing in mind local reality and history. “It is necessary to complement the military intervention with a well-defined and coordinated long- and short-term investment in human security”.

For the academic, the prevention of violent extremism fundamentally involves the respect and promotion of the economic, social, cultural, environmental, civil, and political rights of citizens by the respective governments. “When citizens feel that these rights are constantly being violated and they don’t see any solutions, they become radical and this can easily turn into violence”.

“We who want to see peace and development in Mozambique and Southern Africa must be confident that we have the necessary tools to dialogue and negotiate. Academics can continue to do what they are doing: empower, educate, and train officials and civil society to use the tools,



Prof. Anthoni Van Nieuwkerk

and the right language to engage in a dialogue and not a shouting match. We have intellectual capital, resources, and the ability to analyze what is happening in our region. Africans can do this, we don’t need to hire consultants from Europe”, explained Prof. Anthoni Van Nieuwkerk.

“There have been security improvements, especially in Mocímboa da Praia and Palma, but violent extremists maintain operational freedom”, Piers Pigou, of the International Crisis Group

Another researcher who participated in the debate on the five years of conflict in Cabo Delgado was Piers Pigou, a South African consultant for the *International Crisis Group*. In his speech, he began by lamenting the limitations in accessing the information on the security situation in Cabo Delgado. “We often rely on a single source to try to map what is happening daily or weekly in Cabo Delgado. Civil society acts as a particular element of the media in Mozambique that has sought to expose the challenges we have, but it is sporadic and limited information about the complex field of state actors and foreign intervention forces in Cabo Delgado”.

Limitations on access to information have fueled the winning narrative promoted by the Government, as well as the idea that the operational capacity of violent extremists is being eroded. “Certainly the security situation has changed significantly with the arrival of foreign forces who have been given different areas of responsibility. There was some security solution in the areas under Rwanda’s responsibility, particularly in urban areas. The security situation particularly in Mocímboa da Praia and Palma has led to a significant displacement of insurgents to areas under SADC responsibility. And this situation also serves to fuel a narrative about troop limitations in the region.”

Despite acknowledging the containment of terrorist violence in some areas of Cabo Delga-



Piers Pigou International Crisis Group

do, Piers Pigou warns that violent extremists still maintain “operational freedom”, which has allowed them, in small groups, to capture and attack peripheral areas, including directing attacks against camps of Mozambican troops and set up ambushes against SADC and Rwandan forces. Therefore, he concluded, the security situation varies from area to area. But tight security is necessary to allow the foundations to be established for dialogue and construction of a social contract between communities and the Government.

“There is still an illusion that we can go back to 2016 as if nothing had happened”, João Feijó, a researcher at OMR

One of the Mozambican researchers who has studied the conflict in Cabo Delgado is sociologist João Feijó, Research Coordinator at the Observatório do Meio Rural (OMR). In the debate on the five years of violent extremism in Cabo Delgado, João Feijó began by criticizing the lack of deep reflection on the causes of the conflict and the structural reforms needed to solve the problem.

“There is still an illusion that we can go back to 2016 as if nothing had happened. And the main debate continues to be about the leaders who should govern Mozambique, whether they should be from the North, Center, or South. It is discussed whether there is room for a third term, the tension between Armando Guebuza and Filipe Nyusi. Therefore, there is no deep dialogue about the causes of the conflict”.

Regarding the possibilities of dialogue, Feijó lamented the existence of a government narrative that tries to convey the idea that the authorities would like to dialogue and offer new perspectives to violent extremists, but do not know what they want. And it is not just violent extremists that the Government does not dialogue with, the same is true of civil society organizations. Many are facing problems related to access to information, and difficulties in accessing areas where communities affected by the conflict are located.

“In a scenario of extreme poverty, there is a lot of bureaucracy and obstacles to the legalization of civil society organizations. And the interaction between civil society organizations and the government is often not easy. It is very politicized and is marked by the authoritarianism of



João Feijó Pesquisador do OMR

the Government”.

Despite acknowledging the efforts of multinationals to reduce local tensions and stabilize the region through corporate communication that includes social responsibility and local content, the OMR researcher claims that these initiatives have been ineffective in generating structural transformations in the north of the country. João Feijó warned that the resumption of gas projects in the Rovuma Basin, in a context in which the local population is traumatized and disqualified, will imply the arrival of thousands of workers in Cabo Delgado, a situation that will generate more inequalities and social conflicts. “One of the main drivers of the conflict was the feeling of lack of protection on the part of the local population of Cabo Delgado”.



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