



RESPONSE TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN NORTHERN MOZAMBIQUE

One month before the start of SAMIM's withdrawal, the SADC Extraordinary Summit ignores Cabo Delgado's situation

- Since October 2017, Mozambique's sovereignty has been threatened by terrorist attacks carried out by violent extremists. In 2021, Rwandan troops and the Southern African Community Mission to Mozambique (SAMIM) took the reins to help the country recover the seized territory, such as Mocímboa da Praia and Vila de Palma. After 2 years of exercise, from December 2023, the demobilization of SAMIM begins in a context in which violent extremists intensify their recruitment. The withdrawal of the SAMIM mission is further intensified by the fact that the Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of SADC completely ignored the Cabo Delgado situation.



Introduction

In this text we intend to address the evident departure of SAMIM from December 2023, which will conclude in July 2024, and its implications for the response to Violent Extremism in northern Mozambique. Initially, the justification was that the security situation in Cabo Delgado was becoming stabilized and therefore SAMIM could leave. This was coupled with the fact that SADC countries no longer had money to support their mission in Mozambique.

Meanwhile, less than 1 month before the

start of the demobilization of forces, violent extremist recruitment and violent attacks return to Cabo Delgado.

The Extraordinary Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government, which took place in Angola, on 4 November, did not address the issue of Cabo Delgado, having turned its attention to the elections taking place in the region and to the mission of SADC in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). From this, SAMIM's work in the pacification and stabilization of the northern region of Mozambique can be assessed.

What is the Future of Mozambique after the departure of SAMIM?



On July 16, 2021, the mission officially began when the SADC Executive Secretary presented Instruments of Authority for the Standby Force Deployment Mission to Mozambique. On July 21, 2021, the first contingents from South Africa began to arrive in Cabo Delgado, with the official launch being on August 9, 2021, in Pemba, Cabo Delgado.

Having arrived late to the operational theater, it was clear that SAMIM's success would depend mostly on the willingness of the Rwandan and Mozambican authorities to collaborate. However, it is a fact that it constituted a great challenge. On the other hand, the lack of coordination between the military leaders of the different countries that make up SAMIM, the massive



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presence of troops in the City of Pemba, the prevailing problem of information leakage and little communication about their advances and actions in the operational theater gave the community's a feeling of being an inert troop with a lack of engagement in the fight against violent extremists.

SAMIM, however, began with military operations and made important progress with attacks on the main bases of violent extremists where they inflicted large casualties, recovered weapons, vehicles, documents and persecuted others, forcing them to take refuge in the province of Niassa.

The decision to extend SAMIM's mandate for 12 months was taken last July during the extraordinary session of the Troika of Heads of State and Government of the SADC Organ plus the SADC Troika. The objective was to consolidate the achievements since the deployment of the regional force in August 2021, reinforce stabilization processes and facilitate the safe return of displaced people to their areas of origin. During the meeting of the SADC Troika, Mozambique reported that it was already developing strategies aimed at consolidating the reconquered territories and an action plan to be implemented after the withdrawal of SAMIM.

Scheduled for the middle of next year, the withdrawal of SAMIM in Cabo Delgado was announced at a time when the security situation in the province was not yet completely resolved.

As proof of this, in October this year, violent extremists intensified attacks and recruitment in the region dominated by SAMIM, as in the case of Macomia. These acts could be the harbinger of an opening for the reinforcement of attacks and dominance of violent extremists who are already rooted in that territory. Although with less intensity, violent extremists continue to launch attacks mainly in the districts of Macomia and Mocímboa da Praia, where the preferred targets have been Mozambican and foreign troops.

Although SAMIM troops were predominant in the recovery of territories and the occupation of the extremists' main bases, for a long time they lived in the shadow of the Rwandan troops also deployed for this mission.

However, SAMIM's biggest stain remains the violation of international humanitarian law when a video captured in the forests of Cabo Delgado showed members of the mission burning bodies presumed to be those of violent extremists. In March of this year, an investigation that would be led by a SAMIM team was announced, considering that the elements involved were part of

the mission.

After all these months and with the date of troop withdrawal in sight, there is no clarification on the atrocities committed by SAMIM elements and the risk of SAMIM troops leaving Cabo Delgado without the outcome of the case is growing.

It is extremely difficult to conclusively address the role of SAMIM in Cabo Delgado in a context where despite the improved security situation over a long period and an apparent lack of re-

sources by violent extremists, they are once again recruiting and carrying out attacks in the districts of Macomia and Mocímboa da Praia.

Mozambicans expected that the Extraordinary SADC Summit in Angola, on 4 November 2023, in which Mozambique was represented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Verónica Macamo, would address the Cabo Delgado situation in depth, taking into account current developments of the security situation in Macomia where SAMIM has one of its bases.

Final considerations

In this text, we address the role of SAMIM in the stabilization and pacification of Cabo Delgado, taking into account the beginning of its demobilization from December 15, 2023, which will last until July 2024.

We note that SAMIM's actions were extremely important for the recovery of territories occupied by violent extremists, thus allowing the return of the displaced population to their areas of origin and the restart of their lives. However, this mission was marred by the violation of international humanitarian law with the burning of bodies carried out by some troops. Furthermore,

the withdrawal of SAMIM troops from December 2023 and considering the new dynamics of the conflict that involve new pockets of recruits and attacks by extremists, could weaken the response against violent extremism, especially when we take into account that Mozambican troops were not effectively prepared to be able to act effectively in northern Mozambique.

We remember that the SADC summit, on November 4th, in Angola, completely ignored the Cabo Delgado issue in a context where there are new developments on the ground that could dilute the efforts undertaken by SAMIM since August 2021.



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