

PRESS RELEASE

CDD congratulates the judiciary on the Matavele murder trial, but has reservations about clarifying this State crime

The Judicial Court of Gaza Province has set for Thursday 28 May the day for the presentation of the final allegations, after having concluded on Friday the hearing of the claimants enrolled in the case on the murder of Anastácio Matavele. It is the last session where the Public Prosecutor (MP), the defence, the lawyers of the Matavele family's assistant and the defendants will present their arguments for the court's appreciation directed by Judge Ana Liquidão.

The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) welcomes the trial of the murder of social activist Anastácio Matavele, seven months after the heinous crime was committed. It is in fact the first trial in which a "death squad" made up of special police officers sits in the dock to answer for a state crime and which is politically motivated.

Therefore, the satisfaction of the CDD is based on the fact that there are many flagrant cases of human rights violations perpetrated by "death squads" that have not yet been judged and to this day at least the material authors are not known. Examples of this are the murders of the Constitutionalist and Professor Gilles Cistac, and the kidnappings and torture of the Academic and Professor Jaime Macuane, and the Journalist and Analyst Ericino de Salema. Although the CDD is pleased that this trial will take

place, it believes that this case will not shed light on the murder of Anastácio Matavele, especially the moral authors of the crime, including their motivations. This conclusion stems from the observation that the CDD made in all the hearing and trial sessions and is based on the omissions and shortcomings of the investigation itself, namely:

1. The Court did not request the audios of the telephone conversations between the defendants and between the defendants and other persons on the eve and day of the crime. This is crucial to understand the content of the telephone conversations that the defendants had with each other and with other people on 6 and 7 October 2019. What is included in the case are simple records of calls and exchange of messages.
2. The Public Prosecutor decided to remove Henriques Machava's name from the indictment, even though he is legally the real owner of the vehicle used by Special Operations Group (GOE) operatives in the Matavele attack. The actions of the Public Prosecutor's Office aim at removing political connotations of the crime, since Henriques Machava is a senior member of Frelimo in Gaza and President of Chibuto Municipal Council.

3. In place of Henriques Machava, the Public Prosecutor dragged a Chibuto Municipality official, Ricardo Manganhe, to the final indictment, even without evidence that he actually bought the car of his hierarchical superior.
4. Alfredo Chichongue, an official assigned to the Xai-Xai Military Recruitment Centre, was left aside by the Public Prosecutor's Office, despite being cited by the Matavele killers as one of the people who participated in the preparatory meetings for the crime. Indeed, the meeting of 4 October took place at the social centre of the Chichongue service place, and was that day when he distributed T-shirts, capulanas and hats from the Frelimo campaign to GOE operatives.
5. The organs of justice limited the investigation in the City of Xai-Xai and did not extend the radius to Chibuto, the place where the assassination of Matavele was conceived and financed and eventually took place seven days before the 2019 general elections. Strangely enough, no one was interested in investigating the connections between Henriques Machava, Alfredo Chichongue and Ricardo Manganhe, all of whom had ties to Chibuto; and the fact that the three had familiar and friendly relations with Nóbregas Chaúque, the GOE operative who died in the accident and whose remains were buried in Chibuto. We must remember that the vehicle used in the crime left Chibuto and reached the hands of the sinister squad through Nóbregas.
6. The Public Prosecutor fights to remove state civil responsibility, arguing that the defendants committed the crime in their name and

in their own interest, but all elements show that the murder of Matavele was a state crime commissioned by different Frelimo elements. Apart from the fact that the defendants assumed they were carrying out a mission when they shot Matavele, Esperança Laura, cousin of Euclídio Mapulasse and owner of the house where he went to hide after fleeing the scene of the accident, reinforced this thesis. She told the court that when she wanted to take the accused Mapulasse to hospital, he refused, stating that he wanted to be treated at the headquarters of the Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR) because he had an accident on duty. Furthermore, the GOE operatives are defended by Elísio de Sousa, a lawyer at the service of the PRM General Command, that is, paid by the State.

7. The fact that all GOE operatives throw the responsibility for the assassination of Matavele to the platoon commander Agapito Matavele, clearly shows that they are informed and confident that the escapee will not be located and captured before the trial closes. In fact, there are reports that Agapito Matavele continues to use his bank account and that the Ministry of Interior continues to channel his monthly wages.

Aware that these and other issues will not be clarified in this trial, the CDD demands that the judiciary deepens its investigations by opening autonomous proceedings with a view to identifying and holding accountable the moral authors of this heinous crime. The CDD also hopes that, in the context of the trial opened against Armando Maússe, the young man who took home two pistols hidden by the gunmen, it will be clarified why he travelled to Chibuto first thing in the morning of 8 October and did not return the weapons to the police, as he had promised his friends.

