

UGLY WEEK FOR THE DEMOCRATIC RULE OF LAW

Atrocious violation of Human Rights and the right of peaceful demonstration

- President of the Republic reinforces the campaign of threats and intimidation against defenseless citizens who participated in the peaceful march in honor of rapper Azagaia. Filipe Nyusi instructed the Ministry of the Interior to “identify those who seek to take advantage of the individual virtue of the young rapper Azagaia to achieve their goals”. A rather dangerous “guideline” that reveals, once again, that the State’s authoritarianism results from guidelines from a President who swore to respect and ensure respect for the Constitution of the Republic. Filipe Nyusi’s “guidance” encourages the Police and other State security forces to violate human rights and fundamental freedoms of citizens.



- Filipe Nyusi tried several times to condemn and demarcate himself from the brutal violence of the Police, but he always showed his authoritarian face, his intolerance against people who think differently, whom he called “infiltrators” and “malicious people” who must be isolated and held accountable in an exemplary manner. A carte blanche for the Police to pursue, torture and even murder citizens already identified as “individuals linked to political parties, civil society and non-governmental organizations”.

The week that ends today was marked by several attempts to justify the brutality of the Police that was witnessed during the repression of the peaceful march called to honor the rapper Azagaia, on the 18th of March. Instead of apologizing to Mozambicans and, above all, to the victims of police violence, and reflecting on the meaning of mobilizing thousands of young people to the streets, the top leaders of the Police, the Government and the ruling party on indefensible arguments to legitimize the criminal action of the Police agents deployed to prevent a peaceful march and which had been communicated to the municipal authorities.

First, it was the Police who, in the voice of their Deputy General Commander, Fernando Tsucana, claimed that the repression of the march in Maputo City was aimed at avoiding a coup. Without presenting evidence – because non-existent, the Police said they had verified the existence of strong signs of transition from a peaceful demonstration to a violent one, having decided, therefore, to take measures, such as the deployment of agents to the places of concentration to advise and exhort “demonstrators” not to march. The fact is that the deployed agents prevented a peaceful march from taking place by resorting to the use of disproportionate force against defenseless young people. They threw tear gas and tortured and arrested unarmed people who took to the streets to exercise their citizenship.

And as if the police violence on the 18th of March were not enough to show the State’s authoritarianism, the General Command of the Police started a campaign of threats and intimidation against the citizens, stating that the promoters and organizers of the march were not musicians, “but individuals linked to political parties, civil society and non-governmental organizations”. And he pointed out the names of Venâncio Mondlane, Quitéria Guirengane, Augusto Pelembe, João Massango, Fátima Mimbire, Albano Carige, Ricardo Langa and Manuel de Araújo. Now, it is not part of the attributions and powers of the Police to define who should organize a peaceful march. Regardless of their political affiliation and connection to civil society organizations, Mozambican citizens are free to organize and/or participate in a peaceful march.

Political parties and civil society organizations that cause so much concern to the Police are duly registered in the Republic of



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Mozambique and any citizen has the right to join them. And this affiliation does not imply the loss of citizenship rights, such as the right to freedom of assembly and demonstration. The Police’s job is not to monitor citizens’ political-party connections but to guarantee their safety. In fact, the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique (CRM) establishes that the Police is non-partisan and, in the exercise of its functions, obeys the law and serves citizens and public and private institutions with exemption and impartiality.

After the PRM General Command, the President of the Republic came to reinforce the campaign of threats and intimidation against defenseless citizens who committed the “crime” of participating in a peaceful march approved by the municipal authorities. Filipe Nyusi clearly said that he directed the Ministry of the Interior to “identify those who seek to take advantage of the individual virtue of the young rapper Azagaia to achieve their goals”. A rather dangerous “guideline” that reveals, once again, that the authoritarianism of the Mozambican State results from guidelines from a President of the Republic who swore to respect and enforce the CRM. The “guideline” that Filipe Nyusi left to the Minis-

try of the Interior encourages the Police and other State security forces to violate the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens.

To justify his “orientation”, the President of the Republic reproduced the ridiculous thesis of the Police according to which there were infiltrators who wanted to take advantage of the march “to create disturbances and attacks on public order”. Filipe Nyusi went further by stating that there are videos produced and disseminated by themselves inciting violence which, in his words, “distorts the initial intention of the youth group that did not politicize the request for a demonstration made with the knowledge of the municipal authorities”. For Filipe Nyusi, the participation of opposition politicians in a public event, such as a march, means “politicizing” that same event. The President of the Republic forgets that citizens do not lose their citizenship rights for belonging to political parties or civil society organizations.

In the speech he gave at the graduation ceremony at the Academy of Police Sciences, Filipe Nyusi tried several times to condemn and demarcate himself from the brutal violence of the Police, but he always showed his authoritarian face, his intolerance against people who think differently. In addition

to guiding the Police to identify those who sought to take advantage of the march, Nyusi spoke of “infiltrators” and “malicious people” among young people that the Police must “isolate to hold accountable in an exemplary way”. This is a carte blanche for the Police to persecute, torture and even murder citizens that the police authorities themselves have already identified as “individuals linked to political parties, civil society and non-governmental organizations”.

The President of the Republic’s appeal that “the work of the Police and other Defense and Security Forces is of extreme collaboration with all segments of society to safeguard public safety and the environment in which citizens can exercise their democratic rights and freedoms”. Is an appeal that fell apart when, in the same speech, the President of the Republic labels citizens who are members of political parties and civil society organizations as “infiltrators” and “malicious people” who must be isolated and held accountable in an exemplary way. An incitement to violate the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens made by the nation’s highest magistrate.

So, the fears expressed by the organizers that their lives are in danger make a lot of sense. And the young people insisted on declaring in a loud voice: “ We want to record here that if something happens to the citizens involved in these marches or their families, there will be no room for ‘supposedly’. The association will be direct and natural with State crime, autographed by superior

orders, superior orders that need a face”. And the face of the higher orders finally appeared!

On Friday, it was the turn of the Frelimo party to line up in a hate speech against civil society and opposition political parties. “We recently experienced and will be recurrent soon, a purposeful and well-orchestrated confusion between political parties and civil society. As Frelimo and the Government, we have the thorny mission of doing everything to save public opinion from this blatant ongoing manipulation, with which the intention is to politically devastate Frelimo and administratively disorganize the normal functioning of State institutions”, said Fernando Faustino, secretary from the “*Associação dos Combatentes da Luta de Libertação Nacional*” (ACLLN), the most powerful social organization of the Frelimo Party.

Despite the threats and intimidation, the organizers have already announced that they will proceed with civil action to hold the State accountable to repair the damage caused to people who were victims of police brutality. “The State is responsible for the damage caused by the illegal acts of its agents, under which the demonstrators intend to make use of this right to repair the pecuniary and non-pecuniary damage caused by the Police’s actions”.

Authorities acknowledge that they injured 14 people, one of whom was still hospitalized until Tuesday. 36 citizens were detained, prosecuted and responded freely: 20 in Maputo City, seven in Chimoio, six in Beira, and three

in Nampula. But according to the organizers of the marches, just over 50 people were detained by the Police and dozens were injured, including minors. The President of the Municipal Assembly of Beira is one of the figures retained by the Police in an autarchy in which the local Mayor did not express any objection to the march. There are also records of two houses with broken windows and three vehicles with broken windows.

Of the 12 municipalities where there was a communication of a march in honor of Azagaia, only in four there was an objection by the municipal authorities. In Pemba and Montepuez the objection was justified by the risks associated with the violent extremism that affects Cabo Delgado; in Chimoio, it was alleged that the organizers did not attach the march’s program; but in Vilanculos, the objection complied with superior orders. The municipalities of Inhambane and Tete simply did not comment on the communication from the organizers of the march.

In the six municipalities where there was no objection from the municipal authorities, only in Quelimane did young people take to the streets and march in honor of the *rapper* Azagaia. In the cities of Maputo, Beira, Nampula, Xai-Xai and Lichinga, the Police resorted to violence to prevent marches. The most violent repression took place in the capital Maputo, where several police units were mobilized to prevent the exercise of a constitutional right: the right to freedom of assembly and demonstration.



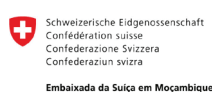
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