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From Promise to Peril: Mozambique's Journey and the Urgent Call to Defend Human Rights in Africa

- Speech Delivered at the Regional Dialogue on the Mandate of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions



ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA | DECEMBER 9-10, 2024



Distinguished guests, human rights defenders, and fellow citizens,

As we convene here in Addis Ababa for the Regional Dialogue on the Mandate of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions, it is both timely and urgent that we reflect on the state of human rights across our continent, especially on this International Human Rights Day.

Today, I argue a stark truth: when human rights are ignored, nations embark on a dangerous path—one that leads to failure, conflict, and collapse.

Mozambique, once a promising nation—a beacon of post-war democratic reform and economic growth—stands today as a cautionary tale. A country that once inspired hope is now perilously close to being described as the “Haiti of Africa.” Political turmoil, economic inequality, and widespread human rights abuses have eroded its stability and dimmed the promise of its democratic gains.

Nelson Mandela once said, *“To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity.”* When governments suppress dissent, ignore injustices, or weaponize fear, they weaken their very foundations. Such actions fracture societies, halt economic progress, and ignite conflicts that spiral out of control.

History provides us with countless examples of nations where unchecked abuses of power have led to ruin. Martin Luther King Jr. warned us, *“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”* Violations in one corner of a society create a ripple effect, destabilizing the entire nation.

Yet, I stand here with hope and belief in the power of change. Mozambique, like any nation facing crises, is not beyond redemption. Accountability, inclusivity, and courageous leadership can restore trust and rebuild even the most fractured societies. Desmond Tutu reminded us, *“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”* Neutrality is not an option. It is up to all of us—human rights defenders, governments, and institutions—to reject apathy and take action.

A Call to Action

To human rights defenders: Your resilience keeps justice alive in the darkest of times. To governments: Know that human rights are not a threat to sovereignty but the bedrock of legitimacy and governance. And to all of us gathered here: Let us recommit to the principles that uphold humanity. As Kofi Annan said, *“Human rights are the foundation of human existence and coexistence.”*

Mozambique’s story serves as both a warning and an opportunity. It reminds us of what is at stake when human rights are neglected but also what can be achieved when justice and dignity are restored. Let us ensure that no nation on our continent suffers the same fate, and let us work together to build a future where democracy, justice, and human rights reign supreme.

Thank you!






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Building a democratic society that promotes, protects, respect human rights & transform people's lives.

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