



# BOLETIM SOBRE DIREITOS HUMANOS



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## Mozambique Government has not yet issued a statement on the burning of bodies in Cabo Delgado

- A Statement from the Government is important to dissipate suspicions that a plan is underway to silence the case.
- We continue to advocate for an independent investigation panel.



**A**lmost a month later, the Government of Mozambique has still not said a word about the shocking video that shows a group of soldiers, in a relaxed atmosphere, burning bodies, Nangade district in Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique. The sepulchral silence begins to worry since it is not known what the Government thinks about the act that is shocking the world. A statement from the Government is important because it will emphasize the country's position on the matter and remove any suspicions about a possible plan to silence the case.

In the alluded video (lasting almost 20 seconds and allegedly taken in November 2022, in Nangade), two military personnel, wearing a South African National Defense Force, throw a body onto a pile of burning garbage. Another flaming body had already been thrown into that garbage before the complicit eyes of other soldiers.

One of the soldiers, filming the scene, wears the uniform of the South African National Defense Force, and is part of the Military Mission of the Community for the Development of Southern Africa (SAMIM), which helps Mozambique in the fight against the violent extremists, that since 5 October 2017 affects the northern Cabo Delgado, and, since last year, parts of Niassa and Nampula.

CDD insists that the Government of Mozambique should make a statement about the incident. It's been a long time. SAMIM troops are in Mozambique at the invitation of the Government. It is the name and reputation of the entire country that is at stake.

The silence is already worrying and raising suspicions that eventually a plan is underway to silence the scandal. Suspicions gain strength because the Government has always protected the military in similar situations. In 2020, a video circulated showed a group of soldiers executing a naked and helpless woman in Mocímboa da Praia, in Cabo Delgado province. After being beaten, the woman was killed by 36 machine gunshots. The Government distanced itself from the case.<sup>1</sup>

A Statement from the Government, at this moment, is important because it will emphasize the

country's position on the matter and remove any suspicions about a possible plan to silence the case.

Following the circulation of the aforesaid video, Pretoria dispatched a team from the South African National Defense Force to Mozambique to investigate what happened. According to Major General Sandile Hlongwa, commander of the Joint Operations Headquarters in Pretoria, representatives of the Defense Intelligence Unit, Joint Operations, and the Army Legal Department are part of the team, which has been in Cabo Delgado since Friday, January 13.

For CDD, this is not satisfactory for the South African National Defense Force to investigate acts carried out by its members.

An investigation carried out by the South African National Defense Force for atrocities committed by its members does not guarantee transparency and impartiality. There is, from the outset, a conflict of interest in this undertaking, as South African soldiers will investigate their peers. It is very unlikely that the investigation will bring results that lead to the accountability. Military accountability is fundamental for sustainable peace, but Mozambique appears to be inclined to support unaccountability.

Therefore, in addition to the Government's statement, CDD is advocating for an independent investigation panel to ascertain the veracity of the facts. The burning of bodies violates international humanitarian law. In a statement issued last week, Amnesty International considers that the burning of corpses violates international humanitarian standards, which prohibit the mutilation of corpses and require that the dead be disposed of, respectfully.<sup>2</sup>

An independent investigation panel will make it possible to know: what led the military to take that decision (did they act at their own risk?); the environment that preceded the burning of the bodies (if there was torture or executions); whose bodies are those (whether military or civilian). This information is important so that the perpetrators of those heinous acts are held accountable for violating human rights.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.voaportugues.com/a/ai-denuncia-video-horrendo-de-execucao-de-mulher-por-forcas-armadas-mocambicanas/5584481.html>


<sup>2</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/01/mozambique-video-showing-soldiers-burning-corpses/>



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