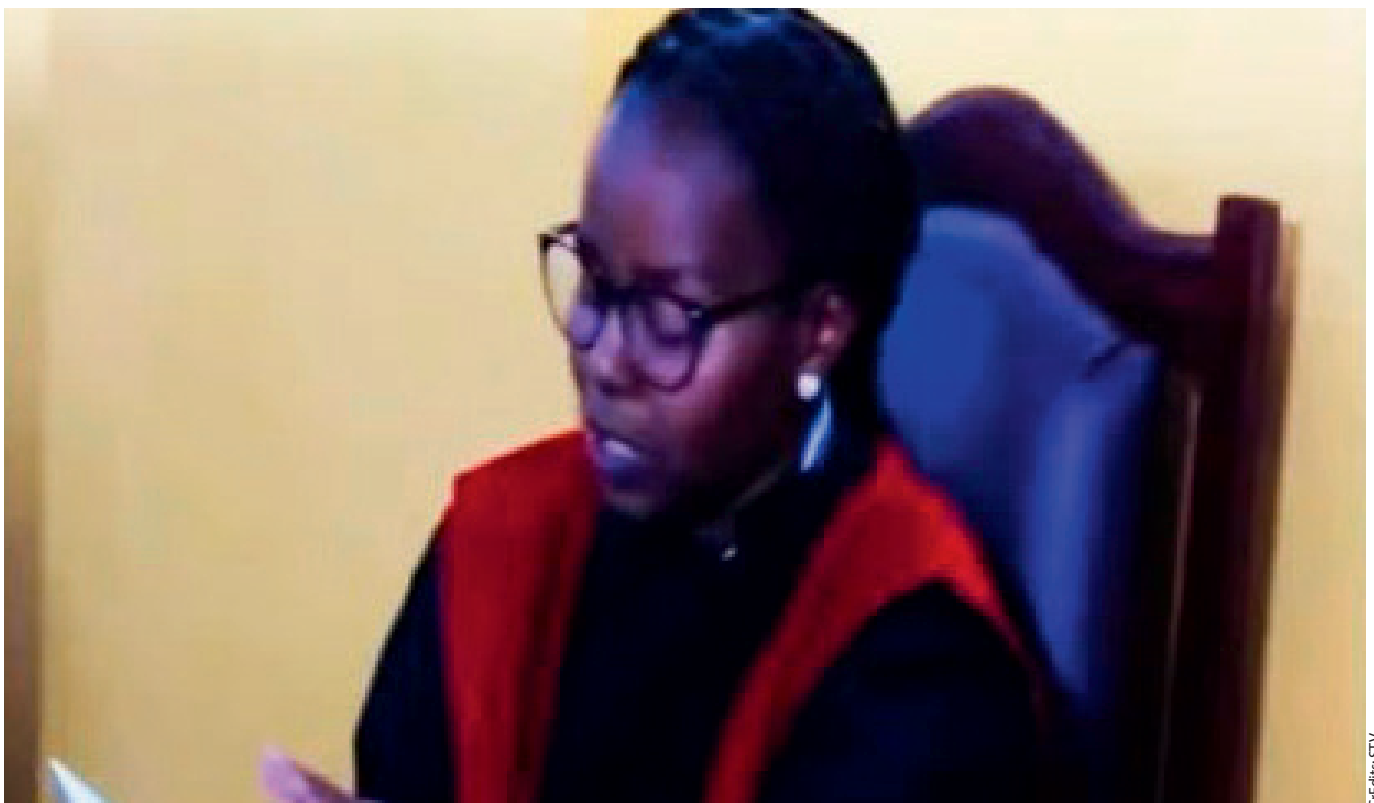




## Public Prosecutor's Office should deal with true crimes and not with humorous staging

- What was supposed to be a simple staging by minors portraying the despicable behavior of Police of the Republic of Mozambique (PRM) agents, particularly those in Traffic, ended up becoming the “big agenda” of recent times for the Public Ministry in Manica. From the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP), society expects answers to the crimes that devastate the country, to the great corruption that lacerates the State, and to the blatant violations of human rights, and not persecution of minors who have done nothing but express, through fiction, a phenomenon that has become frequent in the daily lives of Mozambicans: illegal collections and other acts of corruption committed by PRM agents.



Attorney Belarmina Siteo



ValterDanone

It all started when, in an episode described by art critics as a highly humorous performance, three minors portrayed the reprehensible behavior of PRM agents, in this case, Traffic Police agents, known for acts of extortion, illegal collections, and other manifestations of corruption that they practice on Mozambican roads. In a five-minute video that went viral on social media, three minors describe a typical thief-police scenario.

While one simulates driving a vehicle, the remaining two act as police officers. They question the driver and, just like the behavior of most Mozambican Police agents, invent a fine that reaches 50 thousand meticaís. But this is just a pretext for the minors, who pretend to be agents, to extort the other who embodies the figure of the conductor.

The portrait, somewhat tragicomic, became a symbol of repudiation against the actions of PRM agents. But what artists consider to be a high artistic creation, went down badly with the State, particularly with the Public Ministry in Manica, which found evidence of slander and defamation against the State.

For this reason, the body responsible for legality did not take long to file a lawsuit on what became

known as the “Valter Danone case”, the name of one of the children under six years of age who is part of the staging. The action of the Public Prosecutor’s Office is being seen as a limitation of the freedom to create and exploit new talent. In its effort to find “criminals” behind a simple humorous performance, the Public Ministry refers, in a press release, that “putting a minor in the direction of a vehicle constitutes a crime of exposing a person to danger (...) under the terms of Article 218 of the Penal Code”, which is ridiculous as well as being the ultimate expression of ignorance about the world of fiction.

But it was in the allegations presented in court, on Tuesday of last week, that the Public Ministry made clear the reason for its irritation, which is not the “exposure of a person to danger”, but the satire against the corrupt acts committed by those who were supposed to fight them.

“The children participating in the video denote that they have, from an early age, a pejorative image of the members of the PRM, specifically the Protection Police and the Traffic Police who, from the point of view of the video, are limited to extorting citizens’ assets”, he read. Belarmina Siteo, in the seat of the Judicial Court of Chimoio, Manica.

## Prosecutor's Office must respond to citizens' concerns

When an entire Attorney's Office is lost in a banal pursuit of minors, the CDD points out that, from the guardian of legality, society expects answers to its major concerns, such as the crime that plagues the country, including the violation of human rights, and the great corruption that corrodes the state, while dishonest civil servants, including leaders, usually linked to the Frelimo party, illicitly enrich themselves.

There are several cases on which Mozambican society has been awaiting clarification by the authorities for many years. Cases such as blood crimes, murders, kidnappings, persecutions, and threats against critics of Frelimo's governance linger in the drawers of the Public Prosecutor's Office, without the same concern being seen by the Public Ministry, as now against minors who used art to denounce the bad performance of the PRM.

For cases that concern citizens, and which have been widely denounced, but also visible to the naked eye, for anyone who wants to, the Public Prosecutor's Office does not move, both in Manica and in other parts of the country. On the contrary, the institution that should be the guarantor of legality pretends not to see it. When the pressure is so great that it must appear, the entity reaches the bizarre point of defending criminals.

The trial for the murder of activist Anastácio Matavele, the human rights defender shot dead by elite PRM agents, in Xai-Xai, in a public crime that shocked the country and the world, is just one of the examples of how the Public Prosecutor's Office cares about subverting the reasons for its existence. In the trial of an evidently State crime, the PGR abdicated its duty to protect legality, doing everything to exonerate the State from its joint responsibility for having allowed its agents to murder an electoral observer, just because ungrateful to Frelimo. Anastácio Matavele was therefore assassinated on the eve of the 2019 general elections when he was preparing for the biggest electoral observation, creating nervousness in what is Frelimo's biggest electoral stronghold.

But you don't have to go far from Chimoio to find various subjects of public interest, more than the simple staging of minors. The kidnappings that rock Chimoio, like several other urban centers in the

country, are an example of how the Public Prosecutor's Office in Manica, like other State institutions, has failed to fulfill its role. As in several Mozambican cities, in Chimoio the kidnappers generally walk around the class as normal.

Kidnappings of minors are frequent in Chimoio, cases generally associated with the trafficking of human organs for obscurantist and other purposes. But businessmen and their children are also among the main victims of kidnappers. The PGR never manages to take its mandates to the Court. At most, it is limited to the usual litany of working to clarify cases.

The situation worries the residents of Chimoio who, in April of this year, even clashed with the Police. Angry and faced with the lack of clarification from the right person, the citizens of Chimoio were left to take justice into their own hands. In fact, in the "25 de Junho" neighborhood, they destroyed two residences of a local trader, suspected of having kidnapped two children of his employees. But that was just the water overflowing in the glass in the face of the increase in kidnappings and even the trafficking of human organs in Chimoio, before the impassive gaze of the authorities, including the Public Prosecutor's Office.

Instead of clarifications, the State, through the PRM, fired live bullets and tear gas at the protesters, killing at least one person and injuring several others. The case led to a police-community confrontation, with the corporation ending up detaining 54 people. It is, therefore, on the great criminality and cases of corruption that tear the country apart that the PGR and the other authorities must be concerned, instead of spending energies on the persecution of simple minors who expressed criticism through art, or in attacks on the Union National Association of Journalists and Media.

In addition to the crime and corruption that corrode the State, society expects the Public Ministry to respond to serious human rights violations that are witnessed every day in the country. Just to cite one of the current examples, the city of Beira, the provincial capital of Sofala, is being devastated by a wave of murders. The Public Prosecutor's Office, like the other institutions of Justice, reacts with a deafening silence, with the risk of this falling into justice in its own hands.

## There is corruption in the Police and Public Ministry

After several independent reports showing that the PRM led the ranking of corruption in Mozambique, in August of this year it was the Central Office for Combating Corruption (GCCC) itself that precisely appointed those who should prevent crime, fight violations against the law and ensure public safety, as those who committed the most crimes in the first half of 2022.

In a press conference, the GCCC spokesperson, Romualdo Joane, said that, in the first half of the year, his institution processed 1,373 processes, of which involved not only PRM agents, but also magistrates, members of the National Criminal Investigation Service (SERNIC) and employees of the National Migration Service, by the way, all institutions dedicated to guaranteeing order, public tranquility, and justice.

According to the GCCC, compared to the same period in 2021, this year there was an increase in criminal cases involving the PRM. "Accused of committing legal types of crimes of corruption and related crimes, proceedings were brought against 59 members of the PRM, most of them accused of practicing passive corruption for an illicit act and abuse of office or function, of requesting or receiving amounts from drivers, on public roads, so as not to issue fines and/or other penalties to motorists", said Romualdo Joane.

The Traffic Police have become the most visible face of the endemic corruption that is tearing the country apart. On Mozambican roads, there are more bizarre cases of agents who do not hide their

discomfort when they encounter fully documented drivers, since complete legality does not allow them to blackmail which ends in illicit charges. In one of the viral videos about Police action, a traffic officer in uniform on public road challenges a driver. But when the driver gets involved in locating the documentation, the agent, who carries symbols of the State, tries to clarify that his purpose has nothing to do with documents, but with money.

"Money. Still, looking for documents? I'm not into documents, here. I want money," she says shamelessly. Already in September 2021, a senior leader in the corporation, in this case, the Commander of the Public Order and Security Branch, publicly spoke of corruption and extortion as acts to be fought, since PRM agents must have clean attitudes, free from any act of extortion or corruption.

"Some of our colleagues have been questioning citizens and asking for refreshments. Our attitude must be clean and white. Our white shirt needs to reflect our way of acting and our way of acting in the contact and questioning of the citizen, and never look to the side (...) and the Traffic Police officers will catch up. Is it possible to make a weekly check of five thousand meticais? But some elements of the Traffic Police do this. They have a weekly check of five thousand meticais. It's possible? They are not cattle ranchers. Not a chicken breeder. But he undertakes to make a weekly "xitique" of five thousand meticals between colleagues", explained Paulo Chachine.



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