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GUARDIÃO DA DEMOCRACIA | www.cddmoz.org

Thursday, November 24, 2022 | Year 4, NO. 86 | Director: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga | English

A YEAR OF ARSENIA MASSINGUE AT THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

The Minister's role is not to comment on crimes but to fight them

- It is a typical case of role reversal by those whose mission is to fight crime and ensure public order and tranquility. Arsénia Massingue, the woman who has headed the Ministry of Interior for a year, has been highlighted in comments, often critical of the performance of institutions subordinated to her Ministry. One year after taking office, the CDD reminds the Minister that her role is not to comment on crimes but to combat them energetically, which is a way of guaranteeing security and protecting human rights.



When, in November 2021, she arrived at the Ministry of the Interior, she was presented by government propaganda as an “iron woman”, in the right place and at the right time to fight crime and guarantee public order and tranquility in Mozambique. But, a year later, crime continues to prosper in a frightening way all over the country, under the impassive gaze of those who should be fighting it.

The frequent cases of kidnapping are the most flagrant example of how organized crime has been acting in complete peace of mind, jeopardizing people’s freedom, and other fundamental human rights. In addition to ransom payments, there are bizarre cases widely reported in the press about payment of freedom fees as a condition for people not to be kidnapped. The cases, whose main victims are citizens of Asian origin linked to the business world, are, as a rule, committed in broad daylight and even close to police stations, with the kidnappers less concerned

with the action of law-and-order authorities.

There are cases, no less bizarre, in which, after denouncing the kidnappers’ blackmail to the Police, the victims receive calls from the kidnappers informing them that they are monitoring everything, a surreal case about the capture of the State by organized crime. The kidnapping industry, therefore, has tentacles rooted in the National Criminal Investigation Service (SERNIC) and in the Police of the Republic of Mozambique (PRM).

Incidentally, like the Minister of Interior, the Attorney General of the Republic (PGR), Beatriz Buchili, has already publicly admitted the involvement, not only of SERNIC and PRM agents but also of magistrates and even lawyers, pointing to this as one of the barriers in the fight against kidnapping in the country. Faced with the multiplication of kidnappings under the impassive gaze of the authorities, many Asian businessmen have been leaving the country, withdrawing their investments to other parts of the world.

Errands Minister

When citizens expect bolder responses from the Government to put an end to kidnappings and other crimes that jeopardize fundamental human rights, including life itself, what they find, at least from the Minister of Interior, are comments from a leader who, generally, blames subordinate institutions. SERNIC is one of its main victims, followed by PRM.

One of the most recent criticisms by the Minister was made at the opening of the V Coordinating Council of SERNIC, this month, in the central province of Tete. At the time, Arsénia Massingue said that five years after the creation of SERNIC (formerly PIC – Criminal Investigation Police), the expected results have not yet been achieved, with the institution’s performance below citizens’ expectations. To support her statement, the Minister pointed out, precisely, the prevalence of organized crime, such as kidnappings, whose financiers, and true principals SERNIC have not yet clarified. Arsénia Massingue is quoted by the Charter of Mozambique mentioning that the usual justifications that one is working, and procedural bureaucracy do not satisfy the population.

But this is not the first time that the Minister cri-

ticizes SERNIC and other institutions subordinated to her Ministry. At SERNIC’s 5th anniversary celebrations, in January of this year, the director said that it was up to the institution to bring answers to the various crimes that plague society. “Preventing and combating crime demands, from SERNIC, a properly educated and trained staff. It is up to the National Criminal Investigation Service, as a specialized institution dedicated to the investigation of crimes, to bring answers against kidnappings, drug trafficking, and terrorism”¹, said.

“In order to increase the confidence of the communities in relation to the performance of SERNIC, they must adopt operational measures with a view to identifying the prevaricating agents within the corporation and applying disciplinary sanctions”, stressing that “it is time to waterproof the ranks of Mozambique against the attitudes that stain the institution”².

In March of this year, Massingue also said that SERNIC must stop speeches and clear up crimes. “Citizens, the victims of crime, do not want to hear words like ‘we are working, we are investigating’, ‘wait, let’s call’. Stop these practices”, recommended

¹ <https://www.portaldogoverno.gov.mz/por/Imprensa/Noticias/Ministra-do-Interior-exige-respostas-sobre-o-crime-organizado-no-pais>

² <https://www.portaldogoverno.gov.mz/por/Imprensa/Noticias/Ministra-do-Interior-exige-respostas-sobre-o-crime-organizado-no-pais>

the Minister, when she swore in new directors of the institution. "Victims of crimes expect you to say who the perpetrators of crimes are so that the desired justice can be done to them"³.

Last October, speaking to the press after the approval by Parliament of the legal regime for foreign citizens, the Minister again publicly mentioned that SERNIC has been unable to combat the kidnappings that have been taking place in the country for over 10 years. This month, it was the Minister's turn to indirectly blame the Police for the wave of murders that have been rocking the city of

Beira since the end of last October.⁴

Speaking last week, precisely in the city of Beira, during a police parade organized by the Provincial Command of the PRM on the Minister's visit, Arsénia Massingue accused the occurrence of failures in crime prevention, which resulted in the wave of homicides that shake the Chiveve. "It is our job to ensure safety. When there is a crime, it means that we fail in prevention", she said, face to face, with the PRM, leaving recommendations for "increase operative and preventive actions to prevent these crimes from happening"⁵.

The role of governments is to solve problems

When a year passes after Arsénia Massingue takes office, the CDD reminds the Minister that her role is not to comment on crimes, but to combat them energetically, which is a way of guaranteeing security and protecting human rights. In fact, the failure of SERNIC and the PRM in combating crime, such as kidnappings and murders, is not just the failure of these institutions. It is, rather, the failure of the Ministry for which Arsénia Massingue is responsible and, above all, the failure of the State to fulfill part of its main reasons for existence: to guarantee the security of citizens and protect human rights.

In fact, it is one thing to have political analysts describing the obvious failure of the State to fight crime, and protect citizens and human rights, but quite another to have a female minister on television, radio, and newspapers all the time, to provide analysis of the work for which she herself

is ultimately responsible. When a country has the person most responsible for matters of public order and tranquility issuing messages that, strictly speaking, are the state's capitulation to crime, there is not much to wait for those who put themselves in an electoral suffrage, with a promise to guarantee, among other services, security for citizens.

As Arsénia Massingue celebrates one year as Minister of Interior, it is, therefore, necessary to remind her that her primary mission is to combat crime in all its forms and not to comment on the performance of subordinate institutions, within a framework in which, as a rule, it puts itself out of the game, only blaming the sectors. It will never cease to be problematic to have a Minister who, in addition to solving the problems for which she was appointed, becomes a political analyst on the sector's problems.

³ <https://opais.co.mz/sernic-deve-parar-com-discursos-e-esclarecer-crimes-adverte-massingue/>

⁴ <https://cddmoz.org/escalada-de-assassinatos-na-beira-expoe-a-incapacidade-do-estado-na-protecao-de-direitos-humanos-2/>

⁵ <https://evidencias.co.mz/2022/11/16/ministra-do-interior-assume-falhas-na-prevencao-da-criminalidade-na-beira/>



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