

REPORT ON THE GENERAL NATION SITUATION

Nyusi does not talk about his political vision for Mozambique and avoids addressing human rights violations by PRM agents

- In compliance with the provisions of paragraph b) of Article 158 of the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique (CRM), the President of the Republic went to the Mozambican Parliament yesterday to give his annual report on the General Nation Situation. It was a long and slow speech, with many comments in between, which were answered with ovations from the Frelimo majority side. Nothing new.



Basically, Filipe Nyusi prioritized the accomplishments of the Government during the year 2021. He talked about the fight against terrorism in Cabo Delgado, the control of the spread of COVID-19, the fight against hunger, access to drinking water, access to electricity, access to education, consolidation of the economy, access to employment, and construction of infrastructure. For more than three hours, the Head of State was claiming victories on several fronts, in an exercise of self-praise.

Besides talking on the achievements - which are mostly technical solutions and not conditions for the resolution of problems that afflict most Mozambicans, the President of the Republic dedicated part of his speech to react to criticism that has been made to his governance markedly exclusivist and little open to criticism. And he missed the opportunity to share with Mozambicans his political vision regarding the problems that Mozambique faces, and what kind of conditions he intends to create to enable their resolution.

The responsibility of a President of the Republic and the Government he leads goes far beyond building and rehabilitating infrastructure, creating jobs, providing social services, defense and security, and taking measures to prevent COVID-19. It is the Government's responsibility to define, clearly and openly, the problems facing the country, and to create the conditions that allow each Mozambican to find his or her own solutions.

The conclusion reached by the President of the Republic that the "General Nation State is one of self-improvement, reversal of negative trends, and the achievement of economic stability" does not mirror, in any way, the reality experienced by millions of Mozambicans. This is a reality characterized by the continuous deterioration of living conditions due to the effects of the measures imposed as part of the fight against the spread of COVID-19, high cost of living, unemployment, and lack of social assistance to the most vulnerable layers.

In his speech, Nyusi highlighted the increase in the electricity coverage rate, which went from 38% in 2020 to 44% this year, with a projection of reaching 50% in 2022. But what these data hide is the impact of electricity costs on household budgets and the number of families who are excluded because they cannot afford to pay their monthly energy bill. Rather than celebrating the expansion of the national electricity grid, the President of the Republic should explain how his government intends to protect the most vulnerable families and prevent energy from becoming a luxury accessible only to local elites.

The same reasoning should apply to oth-



er services that have seen some expansion during the year, such as water supply. How to ensure that the expansion of water to a particular location benefits all residents, regardless of their financial condition. How to ensure that the introduction of tolls on national roads does not increase the vulnerability of the least privileged people.

In relation to the fight against violent extremism in Cabo Delgado, the topic most awaited by Mozambicans, Filipe Nyusi repeated everything that was already public: that the joint forces of Mozambique, Rwanda and SADC are tightening the siege against the insurgents; that several bases of the enemy were destroyed and various weapons recovered; that there are more areas recovered and controlled by the regular army and that the number of attacks reduced, including fatalities.

The President of the Republic also spoke

about the death in combat of several members of the extremist groups, including some leaders, and the creation of conditions for the safe return of displaced families. On the expansion of violent extremism to Niassa, Nyusi said that the attacks taking place in the districts of Mavago and Mecula were predictable, since the insurgents are fleeing the military offensive in Cabo Delgado.

The basic question is: If the attacks in Niassa were predictable, what did the President of the Republic, in his capacity as Commander in Chief of the Defense and Security Forces, do to prevent this from happening? Or, at the very least, what measures did he take to, on the one hand, prevent the degree of destruction of homes and public and private infrastructure from being reduced, and, on the other, to ensure that the local population was on guard to avoid the panic that was generated?

Nyusi reiterates that Rwanda asked nothing in return for deploying troops to Cabo Delgado

While the SADC military intervention is financed by the regional organization and the respective states that deployed troops to Mozambique, the presence of Rwandan troops seems to have a hidden financing. The President of the Republic touched the subject again, reiterating that Rwanda has not asked anything in return for its military intervention in Cabo Delgado.

During the celebrations of September 25, the Day of the Mozambican Armed Forces, in Pemba (Cabo Delgado), Paul Kagame and Filipe Nyusi reiterated that the presence of Rwandan troops comes in the context of good bilateral relations between the two states, and that it is financed by the Rwandan government, and does not entail future costs for Mozambique¹. It would be so good if this were indeed the case.

Yesterday, Nyusi spoke again of the existence of a bilateral agreement between Mozambique and Rwanda that enables the deployment of Rwandan troops to Cabo Delgado. And he made it clear that he would not reveal the content of this agreement, allegedly because it is a state secret. Now, state secrecy was the main argument used to defraud the Mozambican state of more than two billion dollars in the financial scandal of the "hidden debts". Apparently, Filipe Nyusi and his government have learned nothing from the mistakes made in the very recent past, which left Mozambique on the brink of collapse.

Last October, Paul Kagame stated that the number of Rwandan troops fighting in Cabo Delgado had increased to two thousand men², almost double the first contingent announced in July. Now, the question is how a low-income country would be financing a large military operation (with two thousand men) with its own funds. Wouldn't Rwanda be receiving indirect funding to support the expenses of its intervention in Cabo Delgado?

France may be indirectly financing Rwanda's intervention in Cabo Delgado, through disbursements made by the French Development Agency supposedly for various development projects. During his visit to Kigali last May 27, Emmanuel Macron highlighted the "re-engagement of the French Develop-



ment Agency," initiated at his request in 2019, as "another tangible sign" of the revival of the bilateral relationship between France and Rwanda. According to the French statesman, the re-engagement "is already visible with financial support of more than 130 million euros in less than two years in projects ranging from rural electrification to training"³.

Therefore, development aid may be one of the windows that France has found to finance the intervention of Rwandan troops in Mozambique. France figures as the main world power interested in the rapid re-establishment of security in Cabo Delgado to allow the resumption of the Mozambique LNG gas project, operated by its giant TotalEnergies.

The question is how will Mozambique compensate for France's spending to finance the Rwandan military intervention in Cabo Delgado?

Rwanda's participation in various peace missions is funded by the United Nations, and the government in Kigali uses part of the funds to modernize its armed forces and police. For example, in 2022 Rwanda is expected to receive the equivalent of USD 171 million from the United Nations in reimbursements for the costs of peacekeeping operations⁴. But the presence of the Rwandan army in Cabo Delgado has not been approved by the United Nations, so the costs may fall on the Mozambicans in the future.

¹ <https://cddmoz.org/governo-deve-informar-os-mocambicanos-sobre-acordos-assinados-com-regime-de-kigali-durante-a-visita-de-paul-kagame-2/>

² <https://www.africa-press.net/mozambique/video/nearly-2000-rwandan-troops-fighting-insurgency-in-mozambique>

³ <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1179992/economie/macron-au-rwanda-la-france-va-debloquer-plus-de-350-millions-deuros/>

⁴ <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/how-20212022-budget-will-be-financed>

Not a word of repudiation against the violation of human rights by state agents

At a time when the national news has been marked by news about the violation of human rights by agents of the Republic of Mozambique Police (PRM), it was expected that the President of the Republic would openly and deeply address the issue. He spoke about the subject superficially, and instead of distancing his government from such practices and/or announcing measures to prevent their occurrence, Filipe Nyusi came out in defense of the police.

For example, he argued that the actions and behavior of PRM agents reflect Mozambican society, since they are products of this same society. He forgot that candidates for PRM officers are selected in a public process that has (or should have) the participation of the communities, and that those selected undergo training that covers, in addition to technical

issues and handling of weapons of war, issues related to respect for citizens' rights, including human rights.

But this is not what happens on the ground, and Filipe Nyusi should address the issue with the honesty expected of a President of the Republic. In its latest report, the CIVICUS Monitor, a global research collaboration that assesses and tracks fundamental freedoms in 196 countries, finds that civic space in Mozambique has gone from "obstructed" to "repressive," the second worst rating a state can have. Moreover, this rating reveals that fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, are systematically violated in the country.

CIVICUS Monitor is also concerned about the deterioration of press freedom in Mo-

zambique, with records of harassment and persecution of journalists and attempts to stifle independent voices. The report notes that unjustified restrictions on civil liberties and deterioration of the environment in which human rights defenders and civil society operate have led to Mozambique's downgrading to the category of "repressive."


"Physical attacks, intimidation and harassment of journalists and activists are becoming increasingly common," reads the report. The draft Press and Broadcasting Laws are other cause for concern for CIVICUS Monitor, "as they contain several restrictions, including a ban on retransmission of news and political programs from international channels and the establishment of a government-controlled media regulatory body."



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